

## The Journey of Faith

As the journey of Faith United Methodist continues, here is an opportunity to take a look back at past events.

In the beginning, the area which is now Richland County, was established in 1788 as part of the Northwestern Territory and settlers began to come. Early religious services were held in homes or later in barns. Throughout this period, circuit riders ministered to the early settlers of our county. The first Methodist Circuit rider, John Cobler, was sent to this new territory by Bishop Asbury with the mission to "plant the first principles of the Gospel".

The first recorded religious services held in the township were at the Peter Pittenger home conducted by Rev. John Clingan. In 1815, Rev. Clingan, Peter Pittenger, and George Wilford organized a Methodist society with 12 members. Early Richland County history shows this location to be at what was later the Pleasant Valley Baptist Church just north of Ganges Five Points on Rt. 13.

What early settlers found in this part of Richland County was the "Big Hill" as a prominent feature. In 1820, a log cabin was built on the land of Nathaniel Osbun where the Richland County Home known as Dayspring, now stands and services held occasionally there. Then in 1821, Rev. Joseph Curtis, a lay preacher and undertaker who had come from England, purchased land and built a cabin and barn just south of the Big Hill. Services were also held in the barn on the Curtis farm. In 1839 Mr. Curtis donated the land for the first church building, just outside the village of Pavonia, and the cemetery was laid out. All the lumber was donated and hauled by the members and the building was erected free of charge by Isaac Osbun

assisted by members of the congregation. This small church served until the year 1875 when it was move down to the village of Pavonia, used as a town hall, and then moved again and is part of a house at 2715 North Pavonia Road. The present building was erected in 1875 at a cost of \$2,400.00 and was called Milton Methodist Episcopal Church of the Pavonia Circuit along with Olivesburg, Rome and Franklin.

In 1822 Henry Newman, son of Jacob Newman, a founder of Mansfield, settled where Franklin and then later Faith United Church stood. In 1834 a new Methodist class was organized in the school on the Haverfield property which is the south corner of Grimes and Franklin Church Road. Then, in August 18, 1836, Newman deeded part of his land for the erection of a Methodist church. The church cost \$500 to build and had 10 members. When Weller Township was formed the name of the church remained Franklin Church after the old township name. The first building was a log church where regular services were held. In 1852, a frame church was built which stood until 1906 when it was moved down the road to make way for the current building finished in 1907 on Franklin Church Road. It cost \$8,000.00 with much of the materials donated by the members. First ice cream socials in 1896 began to help fund additions at the church and promote community fellowship. These socials continued for over 100 years. Epworth League for the young people formed in 1897.

Meanwhile on the south side of the Big Hill, in 1899 Milton Church was remodeled and the space excavated under the northwest corner of the building so that a furnace could be installed. The pulpit was moved and a Sunday School room added. At a meeting in 1900, it was noted that Milton Church yielded one hundred converts.

As time continued, so has our journey and many changes have occurred.

Milton and Franklin became part of a four-part charge along with Adario and Olivesburg in 1928 and preaching was done every other Sunday. In 1939 Adario left the charge. The Milton church changed its name to Pavonia Methodist because of the merger of the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestant Churches.

In 1942 a group of men began excavating many layers of sandstone to make room for a social room, kitchen and three classrooms at Pavonia. The Pavonia multipurpose room became a meeting place for United Methodist Women, Sunshine Sisters, Methodist Youth Fellowship and their activities and a Boy Scout troop sponsored by the church. Another of the Pavonia projects was collecting canned goods for children and the Old Folks' home.

The Epworth Guild was also very active in community projects. Rev. Floyd Eckert and his wife formed the first Methodist Youth Fellowship known as the MYF at Franklin. In 1942 the churches became known as the Olivesburg circuit of the Mount Vernon District of the North Ohio Conference. After a few other redistrictings, they became part of the Mansfield district.

A parsonage was built for Franklin in 1954 and about that time the Young Married Class started having a yearly smorgasbord. Also Pavonia joined Olivesburg as a two point charge. This partnership lasted for 45 years.

In 1961 Franklin added eight classrooms because of increased attendance and Pavonia also added an educational unit that included the now enlarged social room, one new classroom and two restrooms.

As times changed so did both church names with the merger of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist churches in 1968. Franklin United Methodist joined briefly with Adario as the Crestview Parish, was also part of the Black Fork Cooperative Parish, and later became a single point charge again. In 1999 Pavonia United Methodist joined with Franklin creating a two point charge.

In September of 2000 the two churches merged and in November renamed to become Faith United Methodist Church. The decision was made in October 2001 to close the Pavonia facility and meet solely at the Franklin facility. The Pavonia facility was sold in 2002. Plans then began for a new building to meet the needs of the congregation. On October 15, 2002, 30 acres were purchased from Barney and Betty McKinney across from Crestview school campus at a cost of \$157,500.00 for the next step in the journey of faith. In March 2003 the first capital funds campaign began.

Over the years these people have been busy ministering in many ways. They have supported building a well in Brazil where there was no water; they've traveled on many mission trips to Kentucky to help with housing needs, to Arizona to help Native Americans, and supported missionary efforts in many other parts of the world. They also brought the African Children's choir to the community. They have caroled to shut ins and brought weekly hymn sings to Dayspring. The Women's Guild Society and later the United Methodist Women have continued to supported causes for women, children and youth around the world.

Close to home, groups have ministered as well. The Sunshine Sisters is one such group. They have been spreading acts of kindness and goodwill to many since 1970. There has been a food pantry established and many clothing drives. Others have tutored

elementary children, and helped with repairs at Pin Oak Mobile Home Park.

A sign was erected soon after the purchase of the property and many ideas began to form for outreach at the new facility in connection with Crestview Schools across the street.

A driveway was installed in April of 2005 followed by a host of permits and plans being drawn up and approved. In September of 2006 Ohio's Operator's Union began moving dirt and the second capital funds campaign started. Then in 2007, some construction began and there were several workdays at the site around the retention pond to pick up stones to get ready to plant grass. The well was drilled in March and in October 2008 thru Jan 2009 temporary electricity, phone and gas lines were installed.

On March 8, 2009, a very soggy groundbreaking ceremony was held including people representing a variety of ages and on March 13, 2009 loan papers were signed with the bank. Actual building construction started on June 12, 2009. Since then the septic system was installed along with storm sewers. In the fall of 2009, trees were moved to create a sight barrier for nearby houses to the east and various on-site meetings were held at the new facility.

On February 7, 2010 at a special church conference, it was decided to call the new campus the Outlet. It was hoped that the new facility would be a place where people could get plugged into the love of Christ through a variety of programs.

The new facility was dedicated on August 22, 2010 and the following week a huge Outlet Family Festival was attended by several hundred people who toured the building and grounds. The first church services were held in the Café starting August 29,

2010. The YMCA joined with Faith to offer preschool, daycare and many fitness programs at the building. Jared Foos and Gloria Loughman joined the staff to work in various forms of ministry.

On December 5, 2010, the first service was held in the sanctinasion, another capital funds campaign was launched and the building was given permission for final occupancy. The cost for this facility was approximately \$2.4 million. After some additional construction, the Café opened Jan 3, 2011 and the Outlet hosted the Spring District conference in April. In May 2011 the Franklin building was sold.

Programs continue to grow at the new facility. Life Tree discussions began in Jan 2011 and the youth group renamed to Viral Student Ministries in July. Youth basketball, and football programs, monthly food distributions, a latch key program, and pre and post game activities have started in conjunction with Crestview sports programs. Faith has focused on its mission to bring the word of Christ to people around us. During this time of change, vacation bible school, youth activities, various mission trips, Good Neighbor Luncheons, food pantry, local missions, and spiritual growth opportunities have continued. The journey of Faith goes on and we continue yet another chapter at a new location.