

# *Methodist Moments*

## *Chicken Soup for the Methodist Soul*



*Stories Shared by Members  
of the  
United Methodist Church of Monroe*

*On the Occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1973 – 1998*

*May Your Heart be Warmed!*

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## ***Memories of the Women's Retreats***

*Shirley Cornut* - I had a wonderful time at the retreat in 1997.

It was a time to meet others. Over a weekend we had time to really get to know each other.

We had a great weekend of fellowship and learning and discovering our inner selves. Plus, the food was good!

*Cheryl Etherton* - I remember the women's retreat at Madison. Our meeting room on Saturday had one end all windows facing the sound. It was a stormy, windy day and all day we saw the waves crashing against the shore. It made us realize the power and majesty of God. Then, on Sunday the weather was bright, clear and calm, and we were all able to enjoy walking along the shore. Now we were reminded of the peace and calm that comes from God. We all felt a special closeness to each other and our Lord.

## ***Other Wonderful Memories***

*Donna Jean Fredeen* remembers a ski trip with the Youth Group at the Steiner's' House in Vermont ... Robbie Germain hadn't used a rotary phone before!

*Debby Heitzke* has warm memories of picking raspberries and vegetables from Ray Waterman's garden. Ray would call and say that the vegetables needed picking! When she arrived Ray would have bags and baskets ready for picking, and would even entertain Mike, who came along when he was a toddler. Once, Mike accidentally left a favorite book there. Mr. Waterman came across it in the garden, cleaned it up and even taped the edges back together before handing it back to Mike on the next visit. She also recalls Ray giving her a "botanical tour" of all the trees and plantings on the church grounds.

*Jeanne Baklik* remembers her first visit to the Monroe UMC with a friend in the late 1980s. She says, "I was impressed with the friendliness and openness of the group. I also liked the fact that children were a definite part of the church as a whole."

*Shirley Cornut* has several warm memories of the East Village Church. "The first thing I remember about the church was walking over to the church, a mile away, to be baptized at 7 years old. I also remember the loaves of homemade bread my mom would take over to the church. It would sell so fast! What a good time I had at the 4-H meetings. Zada Burr was our leader. When I found the Treasure Hunt box of candy kisses in a mailbox, I thought I had won a million! A group of about 8 couples from church got together once a month for a dinner at each other's houses. This started in about 1955 until 1996. There are so many good times over the years!"

*Donna Jean Fredeen* shares a special memory. "Shortly after joining the UMC of Monroe, Ken and I decided we would like to start a family. After a year, it became quite apparent that this was something that wouldn't come as easily to us as it did others. Frank Denton and others became aware of our predicament, and we were added to the prayer chain. Time moved on

with no success. On December 8, 1991, Frank gave a sermon entitled “The Song of Elizabeth” about the faithful women in the Bible who were barren for years but eventually gave birth. At first I thought the message to me was that I had to wait until I was 80 before I had a child. Three months later, after I finished my first trimester of pregnancy, I thought of that sermon and realized the true message of that sermon. I had never envisioned the angel Gabriel looking like Frank Denton, but I realized that God, too, had sent His messenger to me. More importantly, that experience proved to me that God’s voice is ever present at this church. All we have to do is take the time to listen.”

### ***Habitat for Humanity Memories***

Sue York – “ The very first time the church had a week to work there, Rick Matson had done a good job recruiting people and we were very enthusiastic and a little nervous about going to Bridgeport. For several weeks before the workweek, we kept asking Rick what we were going to do there. He wasn’t sure, but finally said he thought we would be painting. So, we all got ready and arrived the first morning with paint hats, brushes, pans and rollers, rags – all set to paint. This was something we could do! Well, we arrived at the house in Bridgeport. Much to our shock and dismay, the house was a total wreck and was in the process of being stripped and cleaned. We spent the week sweeping up dirt, scraping old paint, tearing things apart – a far cry from the painting job we thought we would do. It was filthy, but fun. We had a great time – worked very hard – and really felt like a true part of Habitat. (I also remember that the women had to plan group bathroom trips through the neighborhood, across a schoolyard and into a dark old church nearby. Quite scary!)”

### ***Memories of the Joining of East Village and Stepney Methodist Churches***

I remember that we moved the piano out of the Stepney Church and the Catholic Church that bought the building came in and exorcised the church to rid it of its “Methodist Spirit.”

### ***Other Special Methodist Moments***

- Roberta Kaempfer, at age 11 or 12, kneeling by the manger at Stepney Methodist Church, and singing “Away in a Manger” during worship.
- Roberta Kaempfer, as a young adult, leading the Closing Prayer from memory for the World day of Prayer Service.
- Bob Marshall dressed as Santa Claus for the Stepney Methodist Church Christmas Celebrations, giving out candy to the children.
- The Organ Dedication and Recital.

- The removal of the bell from the top of Stepney Methodist Church.
- Teas at the Stepney Parsonage for Teen Girls.
- The Youth Group Skit at Stepney Methodist Church that took place in an emergency room and ended up sending one of the youth to the emergency room for stitches, when his head was hit with a mallet.
- The Live Nativity at East Village Church, a tradition made possible by the load of animals from the farmers, and the Christmas Eve Service when the donkey brayed through the entire service!
- The Wedding of Gail Crosby and Lawrence “Dyke” Mas at East Village Church with Tessie Smithson at the organ. The organ squeaked and missed notes because it was so old!
- The Wedding of Darleen Takach at East Village Church: Darleen wore white gloves because she remembered wearing them for Sunday School!
- Buying mint and fudge candy from the Sunday school children of the East Village Church for 10-20 cents per bag.
- The fundraising dinner for the education Wing of the United Methodist Church of Monroe held at a Swedish restaurant.
- Ginny Stevenson’s visit with raptors and other birds to the UMC of Monroe.
- *Ruth Rogers* - When the UMW was looing for a President, and no one volunteered so Ray Waterman was talked into doing it, but this was ruled out by the Pastor because he was a male.
- Men and Kids’ breakfasts.
- Rick Matson’s wonderful Adult Study lessons.
- The Children’s Choir’s production this past year of “The Amazing Scripture Memory Maze” and the adults pulled from the congregation to be dressed in various hats: Reverent Burger, Paul Ewing, and Richard Steiner!
- George Fischhoff’s nationally known production of the one-main musical “Shepherd” on the life of King David, played to an ecumenical audience in Fall 1997, raising hundreds of dollars for our church’s ministries.
- Out Church Bowlathon in 1996 with participation from teens and adults.

### ***Some Memories of Pastors***

- The Reverend Robert “Lincoln” Caswell, one of the pastors of Stepney Methodist Church looked a lot like Abraham Lincoln, so he dressed up as Lincoln on many occasions, such as Lincoln’s Birthday. Robert Kaempfer remembers that Reverend Caswell used to do origami, the art of folded paper, using origami to illustrate points during his sermon at times. Reverend Caswell officiated at the wedding of Vivian Millard, Roberta’s sister, who continues to attend church here as a member. Later, when a historian took an interest in Caswell, the United Methodist Church of Monroe enjoyed a program by the historian with photos of Caswell dressed as Lincoln giving the Gettysburg address! Reverend Caswell was called home to the Lord after enjoying food and fellowship at one of the church’s chicken potpie suppers. You might say he enjoyed a “taste of heaven” and went on to enjoy his heavenly rest!
- Roberta Kaempfer remembers the Reverent Charles Whitemarsh, who performed her wedding. Reverent Whitemarsh served the church during his retirement.
- Roberta also remembers the Reverend Charles Simpson, who worked on the roof at Stepney Methodist Church to create what became known as “Simpson Annex.” He was in his 80’ds when he was working on the roof! What dedication!

## **Memories of East Village Methodist Church**

*From Gwenn Stevens Kadric*

*August 29, 1998*

*Written to Members of the United Methodist Church of Monroe on the celebration of their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

Throughout my infancy and young adult life, I had the distinct pleasure of living in the house on the corner of Barn Hill Road and East Village Road. The house was directly across the street from the backside of East Village Methodist Church, I lived there from December 1937 until 1955 and again a few times thereafter.

My home, which belonged to my Mother's Grandmother Sherwood, had been in my Mother's family for hundreds of years. My mother Grace Elizabeth Stevens, was part of everything that went on in this church. Having lived there since 1906 until her death in 1984, the church was of utmost importance to her life. Her children were baptized there, her mother and father buried from there and my sister married there on August 27, 1947.

As I try to look back, as far as I can remember, I was baptized by Reverend Eugene Richards who served the church in 1942. Reverend Richards did not use the parsonage and for a time it was occupied by the Charles Stowe family. The Stowe family had three children, Margaret (Peggy), Warren and John. About 1945 the Stowe's moved to Arizona, because of Mrs. Stowe's (Edna) health.

In 1946 Robert McMillan and Harry Peeler shared the pulpit. Being divinity students at Yale, they only stayed about two years. Robert McMillan married my sister, Evelyn, to Keith Bulkely.

Dr. Marion Creeper served the church in 1947 and I have no recollection of this period of service. Donald Lester and his wife lived in the parsonage and served the church in 1948. 1949 brought a young couple from Texas, Morris and Neddie Ruth Bratton. The Brattons were still at the church for the birth of their first child, a son. I became very close to them and it upset me terribly when they left to go back home to Texas. IN 1952 Carol and Lola Nelson came to East Village Methodist Church.

On December 18, 1955 Pastor Chamberlain baptized my first born, Helen Smith Kadric, born October 8, 1955. Pastor Chamberlain was neither young nor well, and to the best of my memory he passed away while serving the church. We were then led for a short time in worship by Pastor Charles Cole.

Then in 1959 Fred and Lois Cole came to East Village and stayed about four years. Fred baptized my second son, Shawn Szanda Kadric, on December 24, 1961.

Pastor Donald Hoff and his wife Donna were living in the parsonage in 1963. After a time Donald left the Methodist ministry to serve a church in Harlem, NY. IN 1966 Pastor Kenneth Brown and his wife, Sue, led the church.



Dr. Donald Kirkham came to serve us in 1968. At the time he was a young man from Australia. Soon after coming to us he returned home to take his bride, Phoebe. He returned to East Village and stayed until he graduated from Yale. The next time I laid eyes on Dr. Kirkham was years later when he was at the Methodist Church in Stratford. He was the Pastor that was performing my Aunt's wedding ceremony. It was a pleasure to see him again and since then our paths have crossed many times.

Sometime after Dr. Kirkham left our church we were served by Pastor David York and his wife, Sue. It was during this time that the New York Conference decided to close the East Village Methodist Church and to just keep Stepney Methodist Church operating. This decision resulted in the sale of the Stepney Methodist Church and the building of the United Methodist Church as it stands today.

There are too many things in life that I question and refuse to accept as God's will, the closing of a church for financial gain is one of them. However, my family and I wish the United Methodist Church of Monroe congratulations on their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and much continued success. We will hold all of you in our prayers always.

With God's Blessings  
The Family of Grace and Lloyd Stevens  
Written by their daughter, Gwenn Stevens Kadric