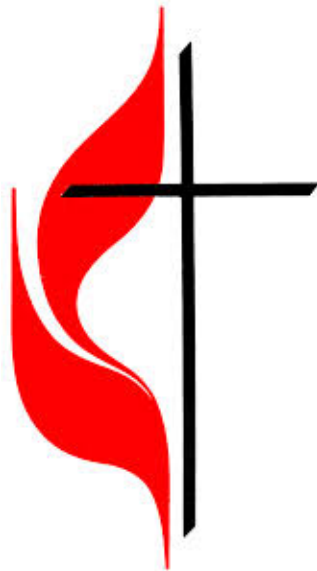


*25th Anniversary
Booklet*

*The United Methodist
Church of Monroe
1973 - 1998*



*Celebration Evening
October 3, 1998*

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What a Team!

Over my fifteen years as a member of this congregation, I have seen, literally, hundreds of examples of “team play” by our membership. “Team” and “teamwork” are grossly overused terms today. It is difficult to read a newspaper article, or watch a television news feature or commercial, without some mention of “team.” Many organizations go to great lengths to tell us how effectively their teams perform. At the risk of overusing these words yet again, here are my impressions of our “team.”

While we have been blessed with excellent leadership from our clergy over the years, they alone could not carry our church and our various missions forward. Likewise, the members could not have accomplished the many achievements without the solid direction of our pastors. It has been the combined efforts of many members AND our clergy that have made this congregation a vital force and a living example in our community. I can think of no finer example of a team in action than the congregation of the United Methodist Church of Monroe.

Consider the description used by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians regarding the one body (1 Corinthians 12:14-31). “For the body is not one member, but many.” While Paul did not use the word “team,” he certainly described a team in a way that we can easily understand today. We are one body with many members – members do not all play the same position – all positions are important – we struggle to accomplish a common goal.

Over the years, like most teams, we have had our share of winning seasons where we, as a church, were “in the zone.” Things went well and we earned numerous victories. Successes came easy. We have experienced still other seasons where we struggled for a relatively few “wins” and we were challenged to learn the reasons for our performance. We recognized that there was room for improvement and we took the steps necessary for improvement. By learning from the past, we influenced the future to make it better than our previous best.

Quite naturally, the members of our team have changed over time. We have fond memories of people who are no longer part of our congregation due to relocation or retirement or sadly, even death. Yet, as some leave, we are regularly blessed with the opportunity to welcome new friends to become part of our church family. And each time we worship together, we renew our bonds with our long-time friends.

While we regret changes that take people from our congregation, we are strengthened by our constant renewal. As someone who shared a particular skill or talent moved away, another person was ready to step in and fill the gap. As needs arise, there has always been someone to fill in the line-up.

Great teams are those that have sustained their excellent performance over time. As we celebrate 25 years as a congregation, I believe that we can rightfully be proud of our past accomplishments and that we can look forward to the next 25 years with great enthusiasm and hope.

High fives all around!

Dennis R. McGough
Lay Leader, 1998

Purpose of This Booklet

It is the hope and prayer of the Membership and Evangelism Committee that this booklet will be both informative and inspiring. Written for the occasion of our 25th Anniversary Celebration on October 3, 1998, it is the result of the combined efforts of our pastor and members in gathering and compiling and telling the story of our formation and development as two congregations and later, one united, strong congregation known as the United Methodist Church of Monroe. It is our prayer that in looking back with joy and pride, we may also look forward to the bright and hopeful future we will create together in partnership with God! First, let's go back to the beginning ...

History of the Methodist Denomination

The twenty-five year history of the United Methodist Church of Monroe is but a minute in time compared to the history of Methodism in Monroe and the United States. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, studied at Oxford University in England in the 1720's. He became a member of a small group which had gathered round his brother, Charles. The group of Christians became known as the "Holy Club," the "Oxford Methodists" or "Bible moths." They were very disciplined and methodical in their studies, thus becoming known as "Methodists."

Between 1735 and 1738, John went as a Chaplain on a Mission to the Georgia Colony. He felt he had failed, but learned much about the people and their faith as he traveled with several missionaries. Returning to London, he was still searching for religious satisfaction by closely following the rules of the Church of England. In 1738, he felt his heart "strangely warmed," and he discovered that inner peace comes by faith in God's mercy and grace.

This was the beginning of his evangelistic vigor in preaching. Wesley preached to whoever would stop and listen. He established the United Societies and used many lay members. In 1744, he organized the Methodist Conference. He remained a member of the Church of England all his life. However, during the American Revolutionary War, he ordained two preachers and appointed Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as joint Superintendents in America. This was the beginning of a separate Methodist Episcopal Church.

Preachers were then sent to the United States. The first Methodist Church in New York City was built in 1768 and called "John Street Methodist Church." It is still a worshipping congregation today. John Street Church was formed by Irish Methodists Phillip and Barbara Heck, following the development of a Methodist Society. One of its popular preachers was Captain Thomas Webb.

In 1784, 60 pastors organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore when they gathered for a Conference. The denomination grew quickly, as travelling preachers, or "circuit riders," carried the faith to the new territories.

Beginnings of Methodism in East Village and Stepney

In *A Glimpse of Old Monroe*, it states that Stratford, “the Mother Town,” was settled by English Puritan families in 1639. The “White Hills Purchase” was secured from the Paugusset Indians in 1671. This territory included Monroe. The new Stratford Society was established in 1782 and became a town in 1823.

The start of the organized Methodist Church in Connecticut began in 1789 and the early 1790’s, when Jesse Lee was appointed to the Stratford Circuit. He organized a circuit of preaching and established the first Methodist Society in Stamford. Also, late in 1789, Lee started a society in Redding. He also preached in New London. In 1791, Francis Asbury, the first American Bishop, preached there as well. Later, a highly successful society flourished in New London.

By 1818, the Methodists had organized over 50 societies in all parts of the state. Property was donated by John Wilcoxson for the East Village Methodist Meeting House in 1811. Later, in 1836, a society began in Upper Stepney, and the Stepney Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated in 1839.

The United Methodist Church of Monroe was formed by combining the congregations of the Stepney Methodist Church and the East Village Methodist Church. In 1973, twenty-five years ago, the new congregation began worshipping in our present church building. The United Methodist Church of Monroe has continued some of the traditions of the Stepney and East Village Methodist Churches and developed its own new and dynamic ministries.

Friendship Circle

One of the groups, which began before the union of the churches and continues to meet today, is the Friendship Circle. Kathy Lester, one of the groups' members, notes: "The Friendship Circle started at Stepney Methodist Church and has continued to meet, broadening its membership. The group meets monthly at the home of Lois Grich. Since 1986, their projects have included johnny coats (1,026, or more), lap robes (572), many bibs and bedpans for the Wicke Health Center, our Methodist nursing home in Shelton, Connecticut. The group is now working on patchwork quilts to give to terminally ill children's organizations so that each child may have their own "special" blanket. Each summer for the past ten years, there has been a picnic in Louis' yard for eight to ten residents of the Wicke Health Center. It has always been a lot of fun to meet new friends, as each year the group changes. The Friendship Circle is open to all women of the church." Kathy also notes: "Over the years, the Friendship Circle has helped to raise money for the original furnishings of the parlor, for the kitchen, and for the sanctuary furnishings." We are grateful as a church for the contributions of the Friendship Circle and for the fellowship and outreach of this wonderful group of women.

United Methodist Women

The Friendship Circle's members also participate in our United Methodist Women's meetings. Together, our women sponsor such activities as an Annual Apple Pie Bake for Missions with helpers of all ages, boys and girls, men and women. They sponsor a Women's Retreat annually. They have breakfast and dinner meetings and have made quilts for the homeless, a lovely quilt for Reverend and Mrs. Denton upon their move to Pound Ridge, New York, and have enjoyed wonderful fellowship together. Most recently, Betsy Sword has led the United Methodist Women here at the United Methodist Church of Monroe and brought enthusiasm and dedication to all she has done. Previous leaders have included Ruth Rogers and Charlene Denton.

United Methodist Men

The Men's Breakfasts, later "Men and Kids' Breakfasts," were started under the leadership of Reverend Denton and Rick Matson in 1986 as a way to bring men together for fellowship with one another and to provide educational programs, such as programs on outreach ministries like Habitat for Humanity. Some programs were led by our own members, some by outside speakers.

Some of the programs held since 1996, when Reverend Burger came to the church, have included a Talent Show by our children and a few adults, a fire safety talk by Reverend York, a "hands-on" experience with reptiles and other animals, and Storytelling at the Piano by Reverend Dick Yerrington, Chaplain of the Methodist Home in Shelton. The breakfasts were held on the first Sunday of the month. While they have temporarily been given a "rest," they may be revived in the same or another form in 1998 – 1999. Many thanks to Dom Turro, Breakfast Coordinator, and to our wonderful chefs, including Mike Nissenbaum, Peter Seferovic, Richard Steiner and Rich Wagner. Thank you to our set-up helpers as well, including: Ron Burger, Ed Davidson, Frank and Richard Denton, Eino Hautala, and Ed Risko. Thank you to our members who have led programs, including Eino Hautala, Rick Matson and Dennis McGough.

Harvest Festival

The wonderful fall foliage and the bounty of the harvest served as an inspiration for the Harvest Festival. The new church on Cutlers Farm Road offered a great location for the festival with ample space to arrange the tables and convenient parking for the lucky customers.

Preparation for the festival began months prior to the actual event. Groups would meet in homes to create the items offered for sale.

The Friday night before the festival was a beehive of activity, with tables set up to display the products of months of work. There was much “oohing” and “aahing” over the workmanship and creativity of the completed articles. Then there was the restless night, hoping that nothing had been neglected or missed.

Harvest Festival day was exciting! People actually waited in line to see the many selections and to make their purchases. What an exciting day! It was rewarding to see the fruits of the hard work of many being appreciated by the happy shoppers. Of course, thinking that everything possible had been done to make the festival run smoothly seemed complete until the time when the proceeds were counted. Goodness! There was a lot of money! And it was late on Saturday evening. What do you do with a lot of cash on Saturday night? Well, the solution may not have been the best, but it did seem reasonable at the time. Let us say that when a deposit was made at the Connecticut National Bank bright and early on Monday morning, the Harvest Festival had earned some “cold, hard cash.”

The first Harvest Festival was a wonderful success. After expenses, the festival cleared \$600. The profits were used to purchase a commercial stove and exhaust fan for the kitchen. The stove is still used in preparation of church dinners.

A month after the first Harvest Festival, plans were under way for the next festival. Groups now met in the church parlor on Tuesday mornings. There were also evening craft meetings. Each week someone was in charge of a project. While creating puppets, Christmas wreaths, Snoopy dolls and stuffed turkeys, world problems were solved, local issues discussed, child-rearing ideas shared and friendships formed. This was perhaps the greatest benefit of the festival.

The Harvest Festival developed a reputation for quality items at reasonable prices. With new members and new creative ideas, the festival expanded. Children’s crafts and games were included, a luncheon was served, and we began to offer our famous apple pies. The success of the Harvest Festival led to the idea of an Easter boutique and the first “Breakfast with the Easter Bunny.”

Items sold at the Harvest Festivals included pumpkins, handmade dolls and crafts, cheese, and tag sale items. Lunch was served.

The tradition of using the proceeds from the festival to furnish the church continued. The tile was purchased for the sanctuary floor, then the pews in the sanctuary, then carpeting. Each festival added something that was needed: carpet and furniture for the parlor, a dishwasher for the kitchen, chairs for the sanctuary, etc. The creative hands of many and the support of the church community as well as the local community contributed to making the church as it is today.

As the town of Monroe has grown and the population became more transient, the church population has also reflected the change. More people working outside the home and family commitments have produced time constraints that have taken precedent over evening craft activities. Interest in the festival faded, and it was eventually discontinued. However, the Apple Pie Bake Sale continues in the spirit of the Harvest Festival.

Submitted by: Dottie Hossler

Service Auctions

Another recent tradition is the Service Auction, held twice at the United Methodist Church of Monroe. The first Service Auction was organized by Annette Griffith. Annette notes that it was a fine intergenerational project, with young people helping adults and vice versa. She notes that Carol Steiner gave rides to her son, Brian, fostering a close relationship that is meaningful to both today.

Most recently, a Service Auction was held in 1997 with a dinner prepared by Mike Nissenbaum and his helpers. Lori Retter, one of our new members, remembers working all day cooking vegetables and lasagna. She was impressed by the number of chefs we have in our church! The 1997 Service Auction was organized by Carol Steiner, and the auctioneers were Ken Fredeen and Chuck Schneider. Members of the church auctioned off goods and services to one another; it was a great way to get to know our neighbors and their talents.

Music Program

The United Methodist Church of Monroe has become known for its fine music program. When Reverend Denton came to the church in 1981, his wife, Charlene, became Choir Director and Organist. She also started a bell choir with choir chimes which continues today under the dedicated volunteer leadership of Bonnie Schneider. Debby Heitzke, a member of the church since 1986, has served as Pianist and has directed the choir since 1996. She and Susan Nikola, another church member, directed the children's choir from 1996 to 1998, when Steve and Kasia Lindeberg volunteered. The production by Debby and Susan of "The Amazing Scripture Memory Maze," a musical performed in worship, will long be remembered for the joy and talents of the children, the humor and active involvement of the congregation in the musical as participants, and the Gospel message! We are very grateful for our talented music leaders and the musicians who form our choir, children's choir, and bell choir! We are grateful for our youth instrumentalists who have volunteered time and time again to play during worship as soloists or accompanying hymns. Our youth also provide music during our annual Trim-the-Tree Luncheon, and they have performed in talent shows held at the church.

For those who enjoy writing poems and music, especially those of a spiritual nature, Reverend Burger formed a new ministry group called "Spirit Song" in 1997 which has been meeting monthly with members from our church, other Methodist churches, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. The group is open to the community, and its members enjoy sharing their work and collaborating together. One collaborative piece by Reverend Burger and Ed Davidson was performed by the youth group in worship on Palm Sunday 1997.

Trim-the-Tree Luncheon

The Trim-the-Tree Luncheon is led each year by Liv Brakewood. It is a wonderful after church event which unites young and old in the spirit of Advent! The children and youth trim the tree, and all gather first for food and fellowship. Youth instrumentalists provide music during the tree trimming. In 1998, we decorated the tree with Chrismons made during several events sponsored by the Education Commission. These Christian symbol ornaments were showcased in a photo in The Monroe Courier. All of our ornaments were dedicated to loved ones. Thank you to Kathy Nissenbaum for suggesting and organizing our Chrismon making!

Dinners

Lobster dinners were another early tradition of the United Methodist Church of Monroe. The lobsters were fresh from Maine, and everyone pitched in to help serve them and clean up, enjoying wonderful fellowship! Carol Steiner remembers the American flags decorating every lobster just before they were served. A very patriotic dinner!

A more recent dinner tradition is the vegetarian dinner, prepared by Carl Sword and held for the first time in 1998. At a fall meeting of the Missions and Social Concerns Committee, while discussing the budget for the coming year, Carl was inspired to propose that the Committee sponsor a dinner to raise funds for the needy of North Korea and Mozambique. Having recently become a vegetarian for health reasons, Carl was pleased to share vegetarian dishes and recipes with those who attended. He was greatly surprised and pleased at the receptiveness and support the people of the church gave the project. The "Garden of Eating" was a wonderful success!

Youth Involvement in Our Church's Life

Over the years we have encouraged youth participation in worship leadership, musical programs, skits and dramas. Sue York and Carol Steiner put on several plays including the choirs, such as "Cool in the Furnace" and "100% Chance of Rain." These had an orchestra of about twelve students. Cheryl Etherton remembers a musical the young children put on where they dressed as different animals – cows, pigs, donkeys, etc. Carol Dean, Cheryl Pavia and Cheryl Etherton had a couple of "cut and sew" days making the costumes; it was a fun time for both the kids and the parents! Cheryl notes that her daughter, Laura, has a pig collection today; perhaps this was the start of it!

Youth Fellowship

Speaking of the youth of the church, our Youth Fellowship has always provided a way for our youth to get to know one another, serve the community, and enjoy trips and events together. At the United Methodist Church of Monroe, the Youth Fellowship has enjoyed leadership by Dennis and Donna McGough, Ron Gugliotta and Bonnie Reid, interns from Yale Theological School, Cindy Germain, Reverend Burger and Leisa Ewing, and most recently, by Reverend Burger, Cindy Germain and Cathy Hautala, with song leading support from Liv Brakewood and the support of many parents. Our pastors have enjoyed getting to know the youth of the church through youth fellowship and other activities, such as skiing and camping. Reverend Burger has met with our youth weekly and organized visits to the Wicke Nursing Home, taken our youth to Cluster Youth Events, organized our first Bowlathon with Leisa Ewing for youth and adults, and taken youth and adults Christmas caroling to the homes of some of our members.

Missions

The United Methodist Church of Monroe has a strong emphasis on missions. Chuck Schneider, CROP Walk Recruiter, notes: "The CROP Walk has always been a great time for all ages from kids in strollers, wagons and back packs to 'mature' adults. It is a time for raising money for the hungry as well as good fellowship. It makes us all aware of people who do not have the abundance we do."

Another way we help the hungry is through our food drives for the St. Luke's Food Bank, coordinated by the Council of Churches. We are assigned two Sundays each year to provide food and funds. The Missions and Social Concerns Committee has tried to develop some innovative programs to collect food. These have included phone calls to members, bag decoration by Sunday school students, and reminders to put on refrigerators. The response from the congregation has been excellent. Don Hastings, Carl Sword and the church's pastors have all made deliveries over the years.

One of our greatest missions commitments is to "Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bridgeport." The church's involvement in Habitat for Humanity has been a ministry to the community and, in turn, a ministry to the church. Reverend Frank Denton was one of the founding Board members of the Greater Bridgeport affiliate that began in 1985. The Denton family actively participated in the building of the first house in Bridgeport, well before the church was involved. Their example and persistence lead to one of the most active ministries of the church.

Although Frank had invited several speakers to talk to church groups, it was a men's breakfast presentation in the fall of 1986 that caught hold. As a result of that talk, Rick Matson visited the Habitat site in early 1987 and subsequently organized the church's first workweek in July of 1987. Rick notes: "The site was a project on Clinton Avenue in a house that had been a "shooting gallery" for addicts. The condition of the house reflected the depravity of those who frequented it. The church participated in the early part of the renovation and was fortunate in 1988 to participate when tile, carpets, cabinets and appliances were installed, providing new life and hope to four families who began exciting chapters in their lives as new owners of the condominiums.

Since that time, the church has contributed continually with volunteers, leadership and finances. The church was one of the first "Covenant Churches" pledging to support Habitat for Humanity of Greater Bridgeport with its prayers, volunteers and financial support. Reverend Denton and Rick Matson were affiliate Board members for many years, and the generous donations provided by our church alone have been equivalent to that required to build a home.

Our annual workweeks have been a highlight of our ministry with as many as 30 members participating for a part of the July – August work efforts. Our physical contributions became most effective when we used many of the talents of the church associated with the construction trades as daily supervisors of the rest of us. We continue to be amazed at what can be accomplished by the human spirit with God's spirit in our midst. Thank you, Frank and Rick, for your years of leading us in our involvement with Habitat for Humanity! For the past two years, Reverend Burger has taken part in our annual summer workweeks, and she also took part in a new project through "Faithbuilders," our United Methodist Cluster of Churches in the Greater Bridgeport area. We began the process of building a new home from start to finish during the week of September 14 – 19, 1998.

Together with the other Methodist Churches of our cluster, we covenanted to raise the funds for the house. Margo Young, a member of our church, is heading up the effort for the cluster and for our church, with the active support of our Missions and Social Concerns Committee.

As Rick Matson has reminded us, “Each visit to a Habitat for Humanity work site is a reminder that the “Theology of the Hammer” works in all of our lives in allowing us to reach out to God’s people in need. Every house is a sermon about God’s love.”

“Following in Christ’s Footsteps”

Christian Education

The United Methodist Church of Monroe believes in adult education. Therefore, we offer adult Bible study on Sunday mornings and at other times such as Lent. The Disciple Bible Study program is a special denominational study program that we take part in. Mary Lou Hastings reports: "Disciple I – *Becoming a Disciple Through Bible Study* – began in the fall of 1995. Leaders for the first Disciple Study group were Frank Denton, Pastor, and Mary Lou Hastings, Layperson. The original participants also included Jack Abbott, Priscilla and Dick Bromley, Dotty Cedergren, Charlene Denton, Jan Germain, Don Hastings, Marilyn Lundberg, Rick Matson, Joy Tait, Boots Takach and Sue York. The group met every Thursday evening for 34 weeks between 7:15 and 9:45 pm in the new wing. Components of the program were at least one half hour daily individual preparation and two and one half hours of group learning, discussion, prayer and support for each other. Disciple Bible Study is designed to effect change. Those who participated caught a glimpse of what becoming a disciple encompasses in the past and present time." In the fall of 1996, Reverend Burger and Mary Lou Hastings led another group through the Disciple I program. Then in fall 1997, Don and Mary Lou Hastings began leading a group in the Disciple II program. We plan to continue offering the various Disciple Bible Study programs at this church.

The United Methodist Church currently has an active church school with 66 students and holds an annual Children's Day in worship. The Church holds an annual weekly Vacation Bible School as well.

Kathy Nissenbaum, Education Co-Chair, reports the following: "Summertime brings a change for our children to view the stories of the Bible in new and exciting ways. The past few years they have sat 'Underneath the Storytelling Tree' to hear the stories of Jesus, listened to 'God's Amazing Adventures,' traveled to the 'Wild West,' cruised on the 'Vacation Bible Ship,' and even heard the story of Jonah from the inside of a whale. This year, they blasted off to the final frontier during 'Bible Space Camp.'

The children participate in mission projects such as Habitat for Humanity and Heifer Project to cultivate awareness of the needs of people both around the world and close to home. Vacation Bible School brings the Bible to life and offers the children an opportunity to learn about God, themselves, and others."

Thank you, Kathy, and all who have helped lead Vacation Bible Schools, including this year's coordinators Kasia Lindeberg and Barbara Royals.

Another outreach ministry of the church to educate children is the Kiddie Campus Pre-School begun at East Village Methodist Church and continuing to serve students in Monroe in the present church. For more information on the Kiddie Campus Pre-School and its history, see the article in this booklet written by Bobbie Grant, Administrator.

In 1990, it was voted that the church add a new addition: an education wing. Church School classes were all held in what is now our Fellowship Hall or Kiddie Campus Room, and it was noisy. The decision to add a new wing was controversial. Some thought a more urgent need was expanding our parking facilities. A survey was conducted of all our committees and commissions to see what they perceived our needs to be, and these were carefully examined. A financial consultant was hired to help estimate how much we would need to raise for the addition. It cost approximately \$200,000 for the job. An architect and builder were hired, and Bob Germain built a model of the new addition. The work took one year to complete. The new

wing was painted by volunteers and dedicated on March 17, 1991. Since then, our Church School has grown and families with young children have been attracted to our church. Additional parking lots were added later. Additional expansion of our building is a possibility for the future and is part of our long-range plan.

There are so many people and groups of people who make ministry possible through the United Methodist Church of Monroe. These include the Board of Trustees, the Worship Committee, the Membership and Evangelism Committee, the Kiddie Campus Council, the Education Commission, the Finance Committee and the Administrative Council.

We look forward to continuing to minister in Jesus' name as we begin a new millennium.

Pastors of The United Methodist Church of Monroe

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1973 – 1974 | Reverend L. David York |
| 1974 – 1978 | Reverend Dennis Wagner |
| 1978 – 1981 | Reverend Louis Leone |
| 1981 – 1996 | Reverend Frank Denton |
| 1996 to Present | Reverend Karen A. Burger |

***The Formation of the United Methodist Church of Monroe
As told by The Reverend L. David York, Pastor 1965 – 1974***

The beginning of the United Methodist Church of Monroe is really a history of meetings, and meetings, and more meetings. Official Boards and Commissions and Trustees met many times to review hopes, plans, details. One major step toward the new building was the decision of the members of the East Village and Stepney Methodist Churches on March 18, 1970 to merge and form the United Methodist Church of Monroe. This was not a quick or easy decision and had involved a lot of discussion, planning and prayer. Another step along the way was the formal groundbreaking which took place on Sunday, October 29, 1972 with construction beginning soon after that event. Two months later, in December 1972, since we had been able to sell the Stepney Church to the Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement, the combined congregation temporarily moved in with the members of the Stepney Baptist Church. For ten months, the two congregations used the Baptist facilities on a cooperative basis, which usually worked out. One exception was that the energy of our MYF members occasionally was bothersome to some of the older Baptist members! The end of the beginning chapter of our present congregation was on October 5, 1973, when a Certificate of Occupancy was given for the new building.

As the Pastor involved in all of this transition, I had a varied schedule. Along with many others, many nights were spent in long and sensitive meetings. Many other informal discussions took place before and after those meetings. I think the most interesting aspect was my various preaching schedules. While we were sharing the facilities of the Baptist Church, Reverend Yusko and I would literally pass each other on the stairs as we were exchanging places in the sanctuary. At one time we employed Allen Farabee, a student assistant pastor from Yale University, who would preach one Sunday in one church while I preached in the other and then we would switch the next Sunday to the other church, and so on. Another time I would preach at Stepney and then drive across town to East Village for the other service ... with the Monroe Police observing my cross-town dash!

While we are observing the significant development of our church building, I think it is important to remember that in the midst of this project we were still maintaining and developing an active church school and mission program. We had an active MYF which did service projects and weekend retreats; the church was also supportive of the Community House, a youth center for Monroe teenagers, something which our town still needs to develop. Other church members were members of the Board of Education and the Town Council. Our church encouraged housing for the elderly, and Harriet Underhill championed that project to the point that Underhill Drive in High Meadows is named in her honor.

There are many stories that could be told, but I think two reports from the March 1974 Annual Meeting contain the essence of the process. Miss Gerda Lex was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and part of her report is as follows:

“This year the Board of Trustees has again been involved in much discussion, negotiation, decision-making, and, very often, “gentle prodding.” Although still sharing facilities with the Stepney Baptist Church, our dream of a new building began materializing in May 1973 when we started our search for the guarantors for the mortgage. In the meantime, work began on the building during which time there came a waiting period for bank approval for the mortgage until certain requirements were met. Finally after overcoming a well problem came the time for Consecration Day which was on September 30, 1973. Many people helped in its preparation by clearing around the church and moving furniture and other equipment from their various locations. Recently, a new stove was purchased for the kitchen because of the efforts of the

ladies who planned the Harvest Festival. Still to be completed are some necessary paving, landscaping and outdoor lighting.

Not only did we see the completion of a church, but this year also saw the beginning of a new parsonage. After bids were sent out and plans were received, it was decided that the most acceptable was from Arbor Homes – a raised ranch with garage, which includes everything except a well and septic tank at a cost of \$31,000. This plan was approved by the Conference Committee, which deals with this area. Until the East Village house could be sold, we had to ask the Conference for \$35,000 to help with financing. The contract was signed and work began. The house, it was decided, will be hooked up to the existing wells at the church. Unfortunately, due to many delays, this construction is not yet completed.”

John Young was the Chairman of the Church Building Committee, and his full report for the year is as follows:

“The Church Building Committee has had a very frustrating, but most gratifying year. We have seen our new church blossom out of the ground into a beautiful new building.

Our frustrations were many as we watched the builder move slowly forward. Materials were late in arriving, and when they finally did arrive, the workmen were on another job and it took time to get them back at our building. Our worst problem was getting sufficient water to make the church operational. Last spring we had so much water we had to have thousands of yards of gravel placed in the drive area to make it passable for trucks and equipment. In the summer we drilled for water (twice) and could find none. While Kiddie Campus held its Open House one Saturday in late summer, we were busy setting and blasting both wells with dynamite with the hopes we could loosen enough rocks to get enough water to open the church.

Even though we were reasonably successful with our blasting and were able to get pumps installed, Kiddie Campus opened (late) with hoses to supply them with water.

The final frustration was, again, water; pipes in the attic area froze and cracked one cold day. When they thawed, we again had more water than we knew what to do with.

Hopefully, we now have a new building with most of the problems solved and that with some additional work on the grounds, parking lot driveway, and finishing touches on the interior, we will all have a church we can be proud of and place to come to and enjoy all the programs of the church.”

This summary of the years leading to the opening of our present building can only touch upon the incredible commitment of many individuals to see the mission and ministry enriched by the development of such a facility. I am proud that in this process we did our best to keep before us the ultimate purpose of our effort, which was to develop a caring, supportive mission-oriented fellowship of believers and seekers. May the next 25 years, and many more, be as productive as the first 25 years have been.

Sincerely,

L. David York
Pastor, 1965 – 1974

East Village Methodist Church

The East Village Methodist Church was attended by the farming community of East Village, Connecticut. It was at one time part of the Long Hill, Sandy Hook, and East Village Charge; a pastor served all three churches.

East Village Methodist Church was known for its Turkey Suppers; everyone helped! Marion Ferris notes that they were so well attended that they sometimes ran out of water! Strawberry shortcake suppers were prepared by the men's club. At Christmas, all of the children in the Sunday school got a box of candy and an orange. Christmas plays were a tradition at East Village. Sometimes at Easter the children in the Sunday school were given plants to take home. Then, as the months grew warmer, the Women's Society planned for their summer Lawn Festivals.

According to Dolores Ovesny, these Lawn Festivals included the sale of baked goods, such as pies, fudge, jams and breads. The ladies wore hats they made. Games for children were provided, such as "fishing pond," and "wet sponge" – throwing wet sponges at brave volunteers!

Family picnics were also a church tradition. So was Vacation Bible School.

During the 1960's, talent shows were held in combination with members from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, the Monroe Congregational Church and St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

Each year, in the spring, a Children's Day was held. In addition, the youth group was active. In the 1960's, some of their activities included bowling, cleaning the church yard, touring the Methodist Home in Danbury, and a trip to New York City to attend a Folk Music Service. Later, the youth led their own Folk Music Service. Our historical records indicate that six persons from East Village Methodist Church went to hear the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. speak! In 1966, six of East Village's children attended our Methodist camps.

The laity of East Village played a prominent role in the leadership of ministries and care of the church. One active member, Jack Zimmerman, preached on several occasions when the pastor was away. Peggy Smith served as Financial Secretary of the church for a long time and says it was a "small, friendly church." The men of the church built the education building, which housed the children and teens. The East Village Church was given to the Monroe Historical Society in 1966. The Education building was sold in 1973 for only \$28,000.

Dolores Ovesny shared with us that her great-grandfather was one of the pastors who served East Village! She became a member of East Village in 1947, was married there in 1955, and her children were baptized there. She and other current church members remember their years at East Village with great love, joy and a sense of accomplishment.

Pastors of East Village Methodist Church

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1851 – 1852 | Reverend William H. Bangs |
| 1853 – 1854 | Reverend J. A. Lovejoy |
| 1855 – 1856 | Reverend Alexander McAllister |
| 1857 | Reverend C. Silliman |
| 1858 | Reverend Benjamin Rexford |
| 1859 – 1860 | Reverend Rufus R. Reynolds |
| 1861 – 1862 | Reverend Edward Aldrin |
| 1863 – 1864 | Reverend William H. Stebbins |
| 1865 | Reverend William Silverthorne |
| 1866 – 1867 | Reverend William H. Adams |
| 1868 | Reverend William J. Robinson |
| 1870 – 1872 | Reverend William J. Gilbert |
| 1873 – 1875 | Reverend Alonzo B. Pulling |
| 1876 – 1877 | Reverend David Osborne |
| ???? | |
| 1898 – 1900 | Reverend Frederick H. Sawyer |
| 1900 | Reverend Rogalio Raymond |
| 1901 – 1902 | Reverend William Guggenheim |
| 1902 – 1903 | Reverend John L. Sparklin |
| 1903 – 1904 | Reverend J. H. Yaggy |
| 1905 – 1906 | Reverend George H. Eastland |
| 1906 – 1907 | Reverend A. W. Harris |
| 1907 – 1910 | Reverend H. I. Thayer |
| 1910 | Reverend George Noble |
| 1910 – 1912 | Reverend Albert E. Beebe |
| 1912 – 1913 | Reverend W. Harry Sutton |
| 1913 – 1914 | Reverend Victor Y. Fellini |
| 1914 – 1915 | Reverend Frank W. Bevan |
| 1915 – 1916 | Reverend Charles E. Williams |
| 1916 – 1917 | Reverend Leonard B. Fuller |
| 1917 – 1920 | Reverend Asa C. Fuller |
| 1920 | Reverend Clifford W. Hutching |
| ???? | |
| 1946 | Reverend Dr. Robert C. McMill |
| 1946 – 1948 | Reverend Dr. Harry N. Peeler |
| 1948 – 1951 | Reverend Donald G. Lester |
| 1951 – 1952 | Reverend Morris H. Bratton |
| 1952 - | Mr. Carl E. Nelson, Jr. |
| 1954 | Mr. Brad Longstaff |
| 1955 – 1957 | Mr. Percy Chamberlain |
| 1962 – 1966 | Reverend Fred Clark |
| 1964 – 1966 | Reverend Donald Hoff |
| 1966 | Reverend Kenneth Brown |
| 1967 – 1968 | Reverend Dr. Donald H. Kirkham |
| 1968 – 1973 | Reverend L. David York |

Kiddie Campus of Monroe

Established January 25, 1965

Article by Barbara B. Grant, Administrator

At a fall 1964 meeting of the governing board of East Village United Methodist Church, permission was given to Janet Eldred and a small group of church members to establish a nursery school to serve the East Village/Monroe Center/Stevenson sections of Monroe and the White Hills section of Shelton. Five church members, including longtime chairman Grace Stevens, loaned the school \$50.00 each and East Village Day Nursery School was opened in the education building of the church. According to the best records I have located, the school started on January 25, 1965 with approximately ten students. At that time, wages were paid if there was any money left after other expenses were paid.

From that point the school grew in enrollment and stature. After Janet Elred moved (sometime around 1968), the committee responsible for the operation of the school hired Jearline Comeau (later Lucas) as director and morning teacher, Mary McLean as afternoon teacher and Greta Anderson as secretary.

In 1971, the school was finding the expense of paying outside people to teach at the school extremely expensive and the school was running children's movies on weekends to try and make ends meet. When I was handed the books (at my first committee meeting), I didn't have enough to make payroll and prayed that we would make enough at Saturday's movie to cover the necessary checks. At this point, the council decided to tighten up on the demands of the director and change the financial structure of the school. A budget was set for the new school year and contracts were given to the employees stating their salaries and setting guidelines for improvements based on enrollment.

During the following years, the East Village Church and the Stepney Methodist Church decided to merge. The future location of the school was in doubt.

As we opened for a new year in 1971, the church decided that we needed to move to the Stepney Church building and the East Village complex put up for sale. Three weeks into the new school year, our head teacher decided to open a new school, Gingerbread School, at the Congregational Church (taking the majority of our enrollment with her), and we moved to Stepney with seven students. Mary McLean was named as director, Greta continued as secretary and the second person in the building as required by law.

Since we were no longer in East Village, the committee voted to change the name of the school and launch a major advertising campaign with a zero budget. The name became Kiddie Campus of Monroe (no K at the beginning of campus, our chairman, Grace Stevens was a retired English teacher and refused to allow us to be cutesy). My best friend, a commercial artist, Jean Tottle, designed a logo for us and convinced a printer she dealt with to allow her to put the logo at the bottom of a printing job he was doing for her. She designed an advertising poster for us and had it printed at the same time. We had work sessions to color the logo and Jean got a donation of colorful heavyweight paper to use as a backdrop. Our next job was to put the posters up anywhere we could. Kathy Lester researched the school records for the names of preschool children and we sent them fliers. By the end of that year, we had increased our enrollment to 27 students and promised the church that by the 1973 school year, we would contribute at least \$25.00 per month to help pay for our expenses.

The next school year, 1972, the church sold the Stepney Church building to Holy Rosary Church and we stayed in that building as part of the selling package. The understanding at that time was that we would be moved to our new church building or another location for the 1973 school year. That was a very difficult year as the new owners tried to work around us and we felt uncomfortable knowing we really weren't wanted in their way.

As we went into the 1973 school year, we had the most exciting Open House in our history. A "ridge-runner" had been hired to dynamite the wells in an effort to increase the flow to a quantity that would allow us to get a certificate of occupancy. He was due to come at 9:00 am and our open house was scheduled for 1:00 pm. As our parents and students arrived, so did he. We explained the situation and the parents were very understanding and stayed in the all-purpose room during his working time. They barely felt the explosion. Those of us watching the dynamiting and praying for water cheered and thanked God when a large waterspout appeared from the first well. The wells proved to be sufficiently productive to enable the operation of the school and the nursery school. Then came an interesting problem, there was a problem with connecting the water and we had to rig a water system for the bathrooms. It is remarkable what can be accomplished with a garden hose, dedication and prayer. We opened on time in a building without a certificate of occupancy. On October 3, 1973, we finally were legal and notified the State of Connecticut of our change of location.

From that point on, we have continued to grow and improve, becoming the largest and one of the most respected nursery schools in the area.

Kiddie Campus Directors:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Janet Elred, founding teacher | 1965 – 1968 |
| Jearline Comeau Lucas | 1968 – 1971 |
| Mary McLean | 1971 – 1975? |
| Marilyn Frank | 1975 – 1982 |
| Jan Dougherty | 1982 – 1983 |
| Diane Matthews | 1983 – 1988 |
| Carol Patoka | 1988 – 1995 |
| Wendy Kohm | 1995 – present |

Chairmen:

Grace Stevens (Eight years)
Ruth Davidson (12+ years)
Cheryl Pavia
John Toumine
David York
Chuck Schneider
Bob Germain
Donna McGough
Leisa Ewing

Administrator/Treasurer:

| | |
|--------------|----------------|
| Unknown | 1965 - ???? |
| Sharon Major | ???? – 1971 |
| Bobbie Grant | 1971 – present |

Current Teachers:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Linda Delaney | 1995 – present |
| Geraldine Engeldrum | 1989 – present |
| Lillian Karolus | 1986 – present |
| Theresa Spinelli | 1986 – present |
| Elaine Steinmetz | 1986 – present |

My apologies if I have missed any chairmen or errors in service period.

Stepney Methodist Church

Stepney Methodist Church was known in the community of Stepney, Connecticut, for many wonderful programs. It was located on the Stepney Green next to the cemetery and across from the Stepney Baptist Church, in the building currently known as “Our Lady of the Rosary Chapel.” Each fall, in October, the church hosted Chicken Pot Pie dinners. In the early years, these potpies were cooked on a wood stove and two oil stoves to the light of an oil lamp. Harvest Fairs were also held on the Green, with the youth group running the games. The Sunday school hosted an Annual Halloween Party. Rummage sales were held in November by the women of the church. In the late 60’s, the church held “Hillbilly Fairs” as well.

Many years the women also hosted a Christmas Bazaar. The women gathered regularly in the early years at the home of Mrs. Gesner to make quilts together, which were sold by the church. Mabel Blankenship, one of our current members, remembers helping the women tack a quilt when she was thirteen years old. Later, the “Friendship Circle” met at Mary Waterman’s house and Millie Chase’s house. They were involved in the church fairs, making items to sell. At one time the women of the church were divided into two groups, one older and one younger.

Each year at Christmas, the Stepney Methodist Church displayed a nativity scene on the Stepney Green. Our members remember Christmas pageants, including the pageants organized by Reverend Clark and his wife. Others recounted how Mrs. Beverly Blakeman crocheted clothing for dolls, which were then given out to the children at Christmas. Many remember Christmas caroling and skating on Beardsley Pond.

In the warmer months, baseball games were held on Stepney Green. Strawberry Festivals were held in the summer with delicious baking powder biscuits served with strawberries.

The Stepney Methodist Church and the Stepney Baptist Church worked closely together throughout their history. Neighboring churches on the Green, they held joint Easter services, rotating from one church to another. They also held cooperative Vacation Bible Schools.

The Youth Program at Stepney Methodist Church was a strong one. Hike and Ruth Wells led the youth group for many years. The youth held Spaghetti Dinners, Pancake Breakfasts, and other events for the whole community. The youth group was divided into three levels: Senior, Intermediate, and Junior Youth.

Some of our senior members have shared some fond memories of particular events in the life of Stepney Methodist Church. For example, Roberta Kempner and Vivian Millard remember the Reverend R. “Lincoln” Caswell, Pastor of Stepney Methodist Church from 1938 – 1939, who dressed up regularly as President Lincoln, his “lookalike.”

Roberta Kempner remembers the Reverend Charles Whitemarsh, who performed her wedding. She also remembers sending her daughters to Brownies and Girl Scouts in the basement of Stepney Methodist Church. She notes that the church was the “center of our activities.”

Curtis Sears remembers the Reverend Wendell Clark, who returned to Stepney Methodist Church as the former Pastor to officiate at the wedding of Curtis and his wife, Ruth, on June 5, 1932. Curtis was twenty years old, and his wife was twenty-one. Reverend Clark had introduced them when Curtis was working for Reverend Clark’s father in Massachusetts. Curtis knew Reverend Clark before he became Pastor of Stepney Methodist Church.

Curtis remembers donating donuts from his Donut Shop, located where the Stepney Liquor Store is now, for food sales at the church. Church members remember Curtis' pumpkin donuts fondly!

Curtis' daughter, Ruth Lynn McMahon, remembers memorizing the Books of the Bible and the 23rd Psalm in Sunday school. She remembers attending youth group and having a great time, under the leadership of Hike and Ruth Wells!

Mabel Blankenship remembers the formality of dress at Stepney Methodist Church. No one wore slacks to church then; hats and gloves were the order of the day. Mabel noted that her father, Robert Bevans, served as the custodian of Stepney Methodist Church for \$1 per Sunday! His duties included stoking the stove to heat the church!

The church celebrated its 100th Anniversary with the production of a commemorative plate. These plates were sold for \$7 each. One of these plates has been sent by Reverend Burger to collectors in Tennessee whose collection has been willed to the Drew University Methodist Archives.

Pastors of Stepney Methodist Church

| | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1839 – 1841 | Nathaniel Mead |
| 1841 – 1843 | Stephen J. Stebbins |
| 1843 – 1844 | Laban Clark |
| 1843 – 1845 | George L. Fuller |
| 1844 – 1845 | Aaron L. Hill |
| 1846 – 1848 | Samuel W. Smith |
| 1848 – 1850 | Lorenzo D. Nickerson |
| 1850 – 1852 | Samuel W. Smith |
| 1852 – 1853 | Charles Gorse |
| 1853 – 1855 | Stephen J. Stebbins |
| 1855 – 1857 | Horatio N. Weed |
| 1857 – 1858 | D. W. Lonnsberry |
| 1858 – 1860 | Joseph Smith |
| 1860 – 1862 | David Nash |
| 1862 – 1864 | Samuel F. Johnson |
| 1864 – 1866 | Theodore A. Lovejoy |
| 1866 – 1869 | Friend W. Smith |
| 1869 – 1870 | Thomas N. Laine |
| 1870 – 1872 | David Nash |
| 1872 – 1873 | Eben S. Hebbard |
| 1873 – 1876 | David Osborne |
| 1876 – 1879 | Henry Scofield |
| 1879 – 1880 | W. W. Martin |
| 1880 – 1882 | C. J. Mallory |
| 1882 – 1883 | Thomas D. Littlewood |
| 1883 – 1884 | Robert A. Sadleir |
| 1884 – 1886 | John Cromlish |
| 1886 – 1889 | William T. Gilbert |
| 1889 – 1892 | J. F. Robertson |
| 1892 – 1895 | J. B. Merwin |
| 1895 – 1898 | E. Warriner |
| 1898 – 1899 | L. W. Holmes |
| 1899 – 1901 | J. L. Rollins |
| 1901 – 1905 | C. S. Dikeman |
| 1905 – 1906 | A. L. Faast |
| 1906 – 1907 | William R. McDermott |
| 1908 – 1911 | A. L. Hubbard |
| 1911 – 1913 | F. H. Sawyer |
| 1913 – 1917 | Frederick W. Poten |
| 1917 – 1919 | G. M. Powell |
| 1919 – 1920 | M. L. G. Proper |
| 1920 – 1923 | A. A. Clark |
| 1923 – 1924 | Henry Blatz |
| 1924 – 1926 | J. H. Ainsworth |
| 1926 – 1928 | S. E. T. Harding |
| 1928 – 1930 | W. J. Clark |
| 1930 – 1931 | R. L. Jerome |
| 1931 – 1933 | A. O. Baggaly |

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1933 – 1935 | R. S. Povey |
| 1935 – 1937 | James Link |
| 1938 – 1939 | Robert “Lincoln” Caswell |
| 1939 – 1946 | Walter Pickering |
| 1946 – 1948 | Selden Marth |
| 1950’s | Charles Whitemarsh |
| 1953 – 1955 | Charles Simpson |
| 1954 – 1955 | Edward Granii (student) |
| 1956 – 1958 | Richard Wilson |
| 1960 – 1962 | James Trew |
| 1962 – 1965 | Frank Howley |
| 1965 – 1973 | L. David York |

A Word of Thanks

Reverend Burger and the Membership and Evangelism Committee wish to thank all who contributed to this booklet through their stories and articles. This is our story! It will continue for generations to come. May all who read this booklet be inspired to carry on the proud traditions of Methodism and to create new traditions and innovative ministries that serve the community.

Happy 25th Anniversary to the United Methodist Church of Monroe!



The United Methodist Church of Monroe