

Bits of History

Source: *History of Otterbein United Methodist Church*, by Paul G. Kline

- January 1896:** With the first church building (a brick church) still under construction, worship services were held in a Sunday School classroom that had been completed.
- January 1907:** Membership of the United Brethren Church of Harrisonburg (the early name of the church) was 270.
- January 6, 1918:** The granite and limestone church where Otterbein stands today was completed at a cost of \$75,000.
- January 19, 1948:** Twenty young adults met to establish the first mixed adult class, named "The Young Adult Class". It was intended to serve young men and women, single or married, until they became 35 years of age.
- January 8, 1954:** A communion set of bread trays and wine trays as well as wine glass racks for the backs of each pew were given by Leona Blosser as a memorial for her husband, Emanuel Blosser. The congregation decided to serve communion in the pews where previously it was served at the altar rail.
- January 31, 1980:** The final item of business at the Trustee's meeting was to officially name a new addition the "W.I. Good Wing".
- February 1894:** Bishop I.L. Kephart, who presided over the United Brethren Annual Conference, assigned the Rev. C.H. Crowell the task of organizing a church in Harrisonburg, (population 2,500). The church was called The Harrisonburg Mission Station, or Harrisonburg-Dayton Circuit of United Brethren in Christ.
- February 16, 1917:** The McCullough Company of Baltimore, MD, was contracted to do the stonework on the new church. The original plan was to use all native limestone, but the building committee decided to use granite from Port Deposit, MD, on the west, south, and part of the east walls. Native limestone (at 25 cents/wagon load) was used on the remaining walls.
- February 8, 1946:** The church board authorized the trustees to purchase the Adolph Wise property that was directly across West Market Street from the church for \$5,000.
- February 6, 1950:** Broadcasting worship services over WSVR radio was instituted.
- February 1962:** The pipe organ was in need of repair. Donated parts from the organ in the former Shenandoah College, Dayton, VA, were used. The rebuilt organ had 1564 pipes as compared to the original 959 pipes, and it was said to be one of the best in the Virginia Conference. Cost of rebuild: \$10,500.
- March 25, 1894:** The first worship service of the newly formed church group was held in the YMCA Hall on the second floor of the Avis Drug Store building (now Kline May Realty) on South Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA.
- March 9, 1952:** Following renovation of the Social Hall, Bishop William Gregory and Superintendent Floyd Fulk officiated at the dedication of the newly named *Memorial Hall*. The new name honored the "Thirteen Charter Members" who founded the Harrisonburg United Brethren in Christ Church in 1894. It also memorialized members of the church who served in US armed forces.
- March 1960:** The Board voted to change the name of the church by dropping "First" from First Evangelical United Brethren Church; thus, *Evangelical United Brethren Church*.
- March 6, 1964:** The benches that were original to the First United Brethren in Christ Church in Harrisonburg were sold to the McGaheysville Pentecostal Church for \$330.

- March 3, 1968:** A vote was held on names submitted by church members and classes for the renaming of the church following the EUB/Methodist merger. The name *Otterbein United Methodist Church* received 139 votes, which far outpaced the next most popular name, *First United Methodist*, with 57 votes.
- March 26, 1978:** Easter Sunday—2.5 inches of rain and sub-freezing temperatures created a severe ice storm. Only a few members braved the conditions and attended the 11 am service. Because special bulletins had been printed and extra preparations had been necessary in planning the Easter service, the Easter Worship program was held the following Sunday, April 2.
- March 1995:** Saturday Night Alive was initiated.
- April 1917:** The last worship service was conducted by Rev. George Fadeley in the old church, which had been in use since early 1897. The church was then razed and excavation began for the new building. During construction, worship services were held in a rented auditorium of the old Methodist Church on West Market Street, between Court Square and German Street (now Liberty Street). This space was later used as a showroom for Rockingham Motor Company (now, RISE).
- April 1958:** The church raised \$7,500 to help relocate Shenandoah College from Dayton to Winchester, VA.
- April 17, 1960:** Easter Sunday—A French Moroccan leather bound pulpit bible was presented by Mr. and Mrs. S.F. Geil in memory of Mrs. Geil's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Liskey.
- April 1974:** The Trustees renewed the contract for another year with the Mother's Day Care Center at \$3.00 per day for use of the church's kindergarten facilities, plus \$5.00 per month for cleaning.
- April 1974:** Meals-On-Wheels began operating out of the Otterbein kitchen.
- April 1980:** The Trustees signed an agreement with Westside Offices allowing them to use the south half of the High St. parking lot. In exchange, Otterbein would have use of these spaces on Sunday as well as for evening events.
- May 1, 1950:** Harrisonburg High School held commencement services at the church.
- May 1958:** Three-hundred-thirty new EUB hymnals arrived. A special fund drive had been held to purchase the hymnals, two loose-leaf hymnals for use by the choir director and organist, and a leather bound hymnal for the pulpit. Total cost was \$590.
- May 24, 1970:** As no seminary student from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio was available for the coming year, the church was able to secure Samuel Espinoza, an Eastern Mennonite Seminary student. He would serve full-time in the summer, and part-time during the school session.
- May 14, 1972:** A dedication service for the newly renovated Memorial Hall was led by the Revs. Murphy and Espinoza.
- May 10, 1975:** The United Methodist Women began holding fund-raising yard sales.
- May 11, 1975:** Following a tower chimes restoration project, a re-dedication concert was held.
- May 1982:** The church softball team, Otterbein Angels, began another year of church league play.
- June 1, 1894:** Rev. C.H. Crowell presided over the formal organization of the new church and paid tribute to the original "faithful thirteen" charter members: *Mr. and Mrs. H.B. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. A.P. Funkhouser, Mrs. H.N. Whitesel, Miss Mollie Life, Miss Ada Glovier, Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Whitesel, Mr. and Mrs. J.N. Garber, Miss Sally Davis, and Miss Jennie Wisman.*
- June 5-12, 1918:** A week of receptions, tours, and musical concerts took place for the dedication of the new church building. That Sunday morning, with the sanctuary and adjoining space packed

to capacity, it was announced that the church needed \$46,500 plus an additional \$2,000 still due on the Loewenbach property. Within ten minutes, over \$40,000 in pledges and gifts was collected. By the end of the day, Bishop W.M. Weekley announced that over \$47,000 had been collected!

June 13, 1954: Harrisonburg Evangelical United Brethren Church celebrated the church's 60th anniversary. Dr. James A. Swain's message was, "The Heroic Past and Tomorrow".

June 18, 1972: The parsonage search committee announced that 162 Elmwood Drive was available for \$60,000, and this purchase was approved.

June 1-2, 1974: 80th Anniversary celebration began Saturday, June 1, but due to inclement weather, the planned picnic was held in Memorial Hall. Sunday worship was conducted by former pastors, the District Superintendent, the Chancel Choir, and the Richmond-area Bishop. Following worship, the visiting guests enjoyed a luncheon at the Holiday Inn.

June 4-5, 1994: Otterbein UMC observed its Centennial Celebration. A sixteen square centennial quilt was crafted by church members. Rev. Donald Fridinger delivered the Saturday message and on Sunday, Rev. Robert Bridgers returned to the pulpit as guest speaker. A catered meal followed the Sunday morning worship service.

June 5, 1994: As soon as the Centennial festivities were completed, clearing of the sanctuary and organ chambers commenced in preparation for the major sanctuary renovation with a projected completion within 120 days.

July 1, 1894: The hall in the Logan Storeroom on Gray Street was rented as a temporary site for worship.

July 1, 1902: The Ladies Aid purchased the Strayer Lot, which adjoined the church, so that a parsonage could be constructed. Cost of lot: \$600.

July 1979: Installation of air conditioning in the sanctuary was completed.

July 9, 2009: Powerpoint displays for hymns and announcements were used for the first time during worship.

August 4, 1917: Bishop William Bell presided at the "Laying of the Cornerstone" of the new church building.

August 1988: A van route was established in order to transport worshippers to Sunday services.

August 1990: Forty-three years after the death of the beloved choir director in 1947, the "Friends of Charles Bazzle" gathered for the first of many annual reunions.

August 2015: The youth groups of Otterbein UMC and Asbury UMC merged.