

A HISTORY OF FIELDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1825–2000

(4th Edition) by Jeff Sigsworth, Church Historian
Revised for the 175th Anniversary Celebration

As our congregation marks the 175th anniversary of “Methodism at Fields Corners,” we at Fields United Methodist Church are justly proud of our recently-renovated, modern house of worship; as well as our ambitious & dedicated pastor – the 91st minister to fill the Fields pulpit. Our church staff, leaders, and numerous committees actively develop and implement our church’s mission-oriented goals.

We continually are witnessing fresh innovations and increased participation in the wide range of fellowship opportunities, Christian education & music programming, and community & worldwide outreach offered here at Fields.

This is a time for rejoicing in our accomplishments of recent years – and a time for further planning and working together – toward our common future in serving God, Jesus, and our community. It is also a time for reflection on our church’s early years.

This necessarily incomplete history (especially concerning the last 25 years’ ever-increasing programming & activities) attempts to chronicle a few random events – just part of the story of the scores of men, women, and youth who have unceasingly worked & planned and contributed & prayed to shape the life of this vibrant congregation – a church called “Fields.”

PART OF THE “WESTERN RESERVE”

The history of a church is the story of its people. In order to tell this story, we first need to explore the origins of the community in which the church has existed. The founders of the future Fields United Methodist Church were among the earliest pioneer families of Ridgeville Township, at the eastern side of Lorain County – a section of Connecticut’s Western Reserve (a vast tract of land in the northeast corner of the Ohio wilderness).

The first New England pioneers came to Ridgeville Township from Waterbury, Connecticut, in May of 1810. The name “Ridgeville” referred to the sandy ridges running east and west across the area – the prehistoric shorelines of Lake Erie, prior to the Ice Age. Ridgeville Township’s history dates from about seven years after the formation of the state (1803), and just three years after the first permanent settlements in Lorain County in 1807 (at Black River [now Lorain] and Columbia Twp.).

TRANSPLANTED TO THE WILDERNESS

The first settlers of Ridgeville in 1810 began a quick adjustment to life very different from that of their quiet New England homes and villages. They found thick forests; swamps (now known as “wetlands”) full of wild cranberries and rattlesnakes; bears and wolves; three natural creeks; and occasional roaming bands of American Indians passing through the settlement. An old Indian trail crossed through the township on a northwesterly course, from Columbia Township to the lake. This trail later was named “Root Road,” after the original owner of Ridgeville Township – Mr. Ephraim Root of the Connecticut Land Company.

The town was even called “Rootstown” for its first three years. The first rough-built log cabin was constructed near a trail through the woods which was called “Lounsbrough Road” in the mid-1800’s, and later renamed Bainbridge Road.

Massive trees covered the entire area: butternut, walnut, chestnut and maple along the ridges; oak, elm, ash, whitewood (tulip) and hickory in the swamplands. Settlers from Connecticut and Massachusetts continued to trickle into the new township during the “teens” and 1820’s. New roads and farms were cleared of trees and stumps; log cabins were built; swamps were eventually drained, wells and ditches were dug, and the wild animals and Native Americans gradually moved west. The second party of settlers destined for Ridgeville took a “shortcut” from the Rocky River through the impenetrable forest – a twelve-mile journey which took four days to complete!

THE PIONEERS FACE “WAR TIME”

The “British scare” during the War of 1812 sent all families in the area fleeing for safety to the nearby Columbia blockhouse, but it was only a false alarm. The “Redcoats” were merely unloading prisoners near Huron, and had no idea that there were American cabins in the forests of Ridgeville or Columbia. It is said, however, that cannon fire during the Battle of Lake Erie (September, 1813) could be heard distinctly by the settlers.

Other stories of the early days of Ridgeville deal with trips from New England by oxen or on foot, persons lost in the woods for days at a time, visits by friendly Indians, bear encounters, and the like. The manner in which these pioneers faced and endured

hardships speaks highly of their independent spirit, and of the community to be formed by them and their descendants.

KEEPING THE FAITH ON THE FRONTIER

In coming to the Western Reserve, these men and women brought with them the best traditions and customs of their New England roots. Religious services were conducted on the first Sunday after their arrival, and were continued in the homes of settlers for several years until a church group was organized in 1822, to meet in the schoolhouse at the center of Ridgeville Township. This congregation called themselves “The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgeville” (now known as the First Congregational United Church of Christ).

Three years later, in 1825, a group of seven persons met and organized the society which still exists as Fields United Methodist Church. Members of the original “class” were: Wilson & Hannah (Van Hatten) Blain (or Blaine), Elijah & Eliza Rigby, and Mr. & Mrs. Harris Emmons and daughter. John & Sylvia (Reed) Kibby joined the class the following year. Both of the Kibbys lived to become our first 50-year members. Wilson Blain (1789-1849) was the first “class leader,” and for many years meetings were held in his log cabin, at the corner of present-day Bagley Road and Butternut Ridge – later called “Lorain Road” and at one time (for about 60 years) part of U.S. Route 10, from about 1925 to 1985(?). Wilson & Hannah Blain’s great-great-granddaughter, Mrs. Della Lyndes Harding, age 94, is still living (in 2000) in Elyria, Ohio.

By all accounts, this group met at Blaine's cabin without the direction of an ordained minister during its first year and a half of existence. At this time, the "class" had no specific denominational identity, but probably met weekly to study the Bible, pray, and sing hymns – as the settlers did in their Connecticut homes. It is not recorded whether or not the Blaines or the other families brought with them to their new homes a piano, organ or other musical instruments.

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN OHIO

Organized Methodism in America had its beginning in 1784 at Lovely Lane Church in Baltimore, Maryland, when John Wesley's hand-picked bishops and other followers formed the Methodist Episcopal Church – which would exist under that name for over 150 years. It was about 40 years after this birth of American Methodism that the first representatives of the denomination reached the "frontier" of Lorain County, Ohio.

Methodism was first introduced to the Ohio frontier in the form of "circuits." These were areas under the preaching supervision of one or two circuit riders. Circuits in Ohio were large at first, sometimes covering three or more counties. Religious needs of a settlement were met between visits by regular "class" meetings. Consequently, growth of the local church was based largely on strong lay leadership. The earliest circuit riders appeared at each meeting place as little as one day a month (and seldom on a Sunday).

In 1824, the Black River Circuit was created from the old Huron Circuit. The new circuit included all Methodist Episcopal

classes between the western boundary of the “Firelands” (Huron & Erie Counties) and the Cuyahoga River, and from Lake Erie south to Wayne County. If a Methodist rider DID visit a meeting at Wilson Blaine’s cabin as early as 1825, it was either the Rev. James Taylor, assigned to the Black River Circuit in 1824-25, or Elijah H. Field, who covered the route in 1825-26.

THE REV. HENRY O. SHELDON

According to church tradition, however, the first “official” visit to the small congregation meeting at Blaine’s cabin took place early in 1827, by a young Methodist Episcopal circuit rider – the Rev. Henry O. Sheldon. He was a tall, thin, gaunt man; and, like the other circuit riders, he wore a long black coat and wide, flat-brimmed hat. Records show that the Black River Circuit in 1827 included 231 members (“225 white and 6 colored”), and that it was part of the Ohio Conference (formed in 1812), which extended into parts of Michigan, Virginia, and Kentucky.

The Rev. Sheldon (born Henry Olcott Sheldon on September 15, 1799, in Connecticut) came to Ohio in May, 1818, from New York State. He settled on a Huron County farm, married Ruth Bradley (his first wife), and entered the Methodist Episcopal ministry in December, 1823. Rev. Sheldon eventually fathered 12 children, by three wives. He died December 21, 1882, in Oberlin, Ohio, and is buried there. In about 1940, one of his granddaughters presented the Firelands Historical Society in Norwalk with his original journals, covering the years 1817 to 1882. It was within these 58 leather-bound volumes that documentation of the earliest activities of Fields Church was located.

Entries in Rev. Sheldon's journals pertaining to North Ridgeville and Fields Church history include the following:

January 11, 1827 – “There has been no regular preaching on the Black River Circuit since September.”

February 21, 1827 – “Rode to Blane's [Wilson Blaine's cabin].... I feel a great desire for a revival – wrote to a member who had backslid and neglected class for a year.”

March 15, 1827 – “....preached at Ridgeville, left my horse and walked to Avon & tried to preach from John. There must be an over-turning here or the devil will have the greatest half of the class.”

April 4, 1827 – “Rode to Blane's.... one joined – several appear under awakening. Two Baptists united with us at Communion lately.”

April 25, 1827 – “Rode to Blane's. There is a spirit of inquiry, but two cannot humble themselves enough to have religion.”

May 17, 1827 – “Rode to Ridgeville.... gave a man two cents to go to meeting, after trying every other method to persuade him.”

August 8, 1827 – “A member has brought scandal upon the cause. Rode to Blane's. As I rode through Ridgeville, just before I came to the house of Maj. [David] Beebe, happening to turn my head, I saw a man walking quickly with a club in his hand. Having heard that Maj. Beebe had threatened to

whip me if I came there when he was at home (his anger having been caused by my giving him a tract and his wife having been awakened), I immediately mistrusted who it was, although I did not personally know him I therefore rode slow – that he might pass me by. I turned up to his house, and seeing some young people drinking at a well, I asked if I could get a drink of water. On being answered in the affirmative, I dismounted; and while I was drinking, he came by with the club and walked in the house. Words immediately commenced between him and his wife. I left a tract and went on. Read a tract at Blane's."

August 14, 1827 – "Rode on through Ridgeville as I rode, a man on a haystack near the road requested me to ride up to the fence, for he wanted to speak with me. I rode up and stopped my horse. He began abusing & swearing, calling me fool – almost everything that was bad for some time. When he paused, I mildly asked him if he had anything further to say. His complaint was my leaving tracts at houses when the men were not at home. He dared me to give a tract to him & to get over the fence and he would thrash me. I told him I sought no quarrel – I had a tract 'The Swearer's Prayer' if he wanted one. By this time, he came down from the haystack with a broken pitchfork in his hand, getting over the fence. I began reading 'The Swearer's Prayer.' He came near and made a pass to knock the tract out of my hand. I read on. He then struck with great violence at my head. Providentially, the blow hit just above my head, on the empty part of my hat, knocking it some distance. He went off. I read on. He moderated down. His brother came and picked up my hat and brought it to me.

I finished the tract, bade him farewell, forgave him, [and] prayed to God to bless him.”

December 3, 1827 – “Passed through Ridgeville considering how much persecution I had here, I rode on humming to myself, ‘O Bless the Lord my Soul’”

December 31, 1827 – “Looking over [my notes] I find I have traveled 3,805 miles during the year. But, alas, how little progress has religion”

H. O. Sheldon

[It should be pointed out that when the Rev. Sheldon spoke of “Ridgeville,” he was referring to Ridgeville Center (at Center Ridge & Avon-Belden Roads), as opposed to “Blane’s” at Bagley Road & Butternut Ridge (or Lorain Road).]

THE BEREA CONNECTION

The Rev. Henry O. Sheldon was also instrumental in a rather large-scale enterprise about 9 years after he last preached at Blaine’s log cabin. Along with the Rev. James Gilruth and Mr. John Baldwin (founder of the Baldwin University, later part of Baldwin-Wallace College, now B-W University), Henry O. Sheldon in 1836 helped to establish a religious education-based “Lyceum community” near the S-shaped bend of the Rocky River in southwest Middleburg Township, Cuyahoga County. The community was called “Water Town” for a time; and then “Stockdale.” But, by September, 1836, a permanent name for

a proposed post office (and, ultimately, the village itself) had to be chosen.

Rev. Gilruth proposed that the new post office and community be called "Tabor," after the mountain of that name near Jerusalem. Rev. Sheldon, however, favored the name of a city mentioned in the book of Acts – "Berea." To settle the matter, John Baldwin produced a half dollar. The two pastors then chose "heads or tails," Mr. Baldwin tossed the coin, and Rev. Sheldon's choice (heads) prevailed. He then became the new village's first postmaster (1837-49), and helped to build Berea's first grist mill. Sheldon Street in Berea was named after him; and Henry Street was named for his son, Henry Sheldon, Jr.

THE CIRCUIT RIDER ERA

The heroes of early Methodism in this country were the circuit riding preachers. The circuit riders did not stay long in one place. Their home was their horse, as they traveled from settlement to settlement, and from home to home. When they were invited to sleep inside a cabin, they did. When there was no invitation, they slept outside. Barns, cabins, and fields were the only churches they had.

Toward the close of 1827, the Rev. Sheldon was assisted on the circuit by a "junior preacher," the Rev. Ansel Brainard. They both were replaced in 1827-29 by Shadrach Ruark and John C. Havens. For the next 75 years or so, the circuit which included Wilson Blaine's class was assigned new riders every year or two – to "direct them in the knowledge and love of God."

The Rev. Cyrus Carpenter and a 20-year-old assistant preacher, Henry Colclazer, were appointed to the Black River Circuit in 1829. Colclazer left after one year to ride a larger circuit in the Michigan Territory. He later became Presiding Elder of his district, and the first librarian at the University of Michigan (founded by a former Elyria resident, the Rev. John Monteith).

Cyrus Carpenter was joined on the Black River Circuit in 1830 by the Rev. Elnathan Corrington Gavitt, an enthusiastic 22-year-old preacher on his first regular appointment. Rev. Gavitt, who was born in Granville, Ohio, gave his first sermon at the age of 11, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church at age 18. In 1833, he married Sophia J. Halsey, the first school teacher in Amherst, Ohio (where they made their home for a number of years.)

THE RISE OF ELNATHAN C. GAVITT

The Rev. Dr. Gavitt's career was destined to rise markedly from his \$75-a-year position on the Black River Circuit in Ohio. As a young circuit rider along the Mississippi River, Elnathan counted among his membership Col. Zachary Taylor (future General and 12th U.S. President). During his 66-year ministry, Dr. Gavitt served as Presiding Elder, agent for Ohio Wesleyan University, co-organizer of the Central Ohio Conference, and chaplain at a Toledo hospital (in his March, 1896, obituary, it was stated that Elnathan C. Gavitt gave the first sermon ever heard in Toledo). His preaching was rated among the best in America in the mid-1800's. Blaine's small congregation in Ridgeville Township was fortunate to have been visited, if only briefly, by such a dynamic speaker.

In his autobiography, “Crumbs from My Saddle Bags,” the Rev. Gavitt made several references to his start on the Black River Circuit, and about the preachers’ salaries. He wrote, “In 1830, I was assigned to the Black River Circuit in company with Cyrus S. Carpenter, an excellent Christian brother of [just] ordinary ministerial ability. He was favored with a superior educated [marital] companion . . . a very kind and sweet dispositioned lady. She was a valuable accession to the charge, and contributed largely to the usefulness of her husband.”

The presiding elders of the church basically discouraged marriage for their “saddle-bag preachers.” Some of the congregations on the circuits were also against it, because their donations must of necessity be larger to support the rider’s family – which often rode along with him. In 1830, the salary for a married preacher was \$200 a year; for an unmarried one, \$100; and for a junior preacher, \$75. There was occasionally a problem, too, in where to house these people (“You take them this trip; I have company coming, and my ‘young-uns’ are half sick.”).

At one time, the Rev. Gavitt tried to start a small Methodist Episcopal class in the village of Oberlin, but he met resistance from the College, which had already sanctioned a church of the “preferred” denomination, Congregational [First Church]. The Rev. Charles G. Finney of the College wanted “. . . to keep the place free from any conflicting influences.” Mr. Gavitt responded, “Well, my good brother, that may be alright and the best thing for your church and the institution, but it was somewhat unfortunate that the Lord had not been informed of that fact in time.” He continued, “Then He would have said, ‘Go ye into all the world and preach My Gospel to every creature – except in

Oberlin.' There they want the exclusive right of (Congregational) church membership, and no Methodist interference whatever." A class was started soon thereafter, with 20 members. [This Methodist Episcopal class was later disbanded, and succeeded in 1868 by the current Oberlin Methodist Church.]

"BRIGGS' CORNERS" IS BORN

In 1830, Mr. Otis Briggs came to Ridgeville from New England, purchasing land some distance west of Blaine's cabin, adjacent to the intersection of Butternut Ridge and Root Roads – his stagecoach inn (known as the "Temperance Tavern": alcohol-free) is still standing there today, on the northeast corner; currently owned by Delbert & Shirley Worcester. The area around this crossroads soon came to be known as "Briggs' Corners"; and the Briggs family, for several generations, were active members and leaders of the Methodist congregation there. [Mr. Briggs' wife, Rispa Terrell, was a member of the Ridgeville pioneer family; and their grandson, Frank W. Briggs (1857-1920), church Trustee from 1903 to 1913, once owned the silver serving set now displayed in the church narthex.]

Late in 1831, the Black River Circuit was divided into the new Elyria and Norwalk Circuits when it was calculated that its membership exceeded 660 persons. Rev. William Runnels, 29, was assigned to the Elyria Circuit, which would serve the Briggs' Corners "class." Runnels, a Maine abolitionist, later helped to found the Baldwin University (now part of Baldwin-Wallace College) in Berea. Appointed as his junior preacher on the circuit was George Elliot, age 21, from England (who died at the

age of 30). Thirty-year-old John Kinnear replaced Elliot the next year (1832).

Alvin Billings and James Brewster were assigned to the circuit in 1833; Rev. Billings continued to preach in Ohio and Michigan until his retirement during the Civil War (1863). Brewster, age 24, left the ministry in the winter of 1833-34 due to poor health. Early the following spring, his saddle was filled by the Rev. John Wilkinson.

CHANGES AT BRIGGS' CORNERS

In about 1835, the Briggs' Corners congregation began holding Sunday services at the local schoolhouse, instead of at Blaines' log cabin. The log school building was located on Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road), just west of Root Road – about 150 feet south of the future site of Fields-Sweet Elementary School on Root Road. This one-room log school was replaced within a short time by a frame structure – “District No. 4” (which in later years was moved to Chestnut Ridge Road and used as a private home, when it was succeeded by a two-room brick school). [The three-room brick “Fields Elementary School” was built north of this site in 1923, and opened in 1924, as part of the “centralization” of the Township’s 10 district schools.]

The year 1835 also saw the appointment of James Wheeler, 34, and Thomas Barkdull, a 22-year-old bachelor, to the Elyria Circuit (in 1836, Rev. Barkdull married Caroline Hendry of Elyria). Rev. Wheeler later became president of Baldwin-Wallace, and Barkdull eventually served as Presiding Elder at Mount Vernon, Ohio (where he died in 1869). Both men had

attended Norwalk Seminary. In 1836, our section of the old Ohio Conference was acquired by the newly-formed Michigan Conference (of which we would remain a part for only four years' time).

The late 1830's saw the start of major changes in the routes of the circuits, brought about by increased membership in the frontier settlements & villages. Elyria M. E. Church became an independent "station" in 1837, and the remainder of the six-year-old Elyria Circuit (400 members) was divided between the Vermilion and Dover (now Westlake & Bay Village) Circuits. The Briggs' Corners M. E. Church apparently was consigned to the Dover Circuit for the next several years.

THE CIRCUIT RIDER'S HARD LIFE

Throughout the 1800's, each traveling preacher was replaced annually by the Conference, and placed in another circuit. The rough terrain, lack of roads & bridges, inclement Ohio weather, and general discomfort of riding in the saddle often took their toll on a man (and his horse). The 1837-38 Conference Minutes listed our former pastors Shadrach Ruark and Alvin Billings as "worn-out preachers" – as was Thomas Barkdull, the next year.

Our portion of the Michigan Conference was absorbed in 1840 by the new North Ohio Conference, to which our church and district belonged for 72 years (1840-1912). Records show that, in 1843, the Presiding Elder of the district including the Briggs' Corners church was the Rev. Adam Poe. One historian said of Poe, "His name is a household word in every Methodist home in

this region – a man of Herculean frame; and an able, earnest, and effective preacher.”

BUILDING OUR OWN PLACE OF WORSHIP

Root Road, the old Indian trail, originally crossed Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road) a little farther to the west (just west of the old Fields Church); but in the 1830's, Otis Briggs had the road “straightened” and moved – to give his home & stagecoach inn a corner location (the 2-story white frame building still stands on the northeast corner of the intersection). On April 12, 1848, land near the southwest corner measuring “5 by 8 rods” (to be used for future construction) was purchased from Mr. Briggs for a “consideration” of \$40 – the property was deeded to the “Butternut Ridge Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church” (later to be known as Fields U.M. Church). A copy of the original deed is preserved among the papers of the church.

This parcel of land became the site, two years later (1850), of the Briggs' Corners M. E. Church members' first permanent meeting place. The new church was a frame structure, situated near the location of the present (old) building – now owned by Faith Baptist Temple. Trustees of the church at that time, according to the 1848 deed, were: Wilson Blaine, Richard Blaine [his son], John Bainbridge, William Bainbridge, and John Kibby.

A GROWING COMMUNITY

By the 1840's, 1850's, and 1860's, Ridgeville Township was becoming more civilized; the bears and Indians had moved westward, the swamps were mostly drained, and the forests were

cleared. It was also becoming an “industrial community” – Ridgeville could boast of saw-, grist-, and cider mills; tanneries, cheese factories and blacksmith shops; the railroad station at “Shawville” (1853) on Avon-Belden Road, quarries, and even an iron mine. With the coming of the railroad (and, in 1895, the trolley car line) residents were less dependent on the stagecoach or horse & buggy for long-distance travel.

Throughout the middle 1800’s, a number of the pioneer farms in southeastern Ridgeville Township were “bought up” in an influx of English immigrants to the area (a large number of German Catholic families settled soon afterward in the northern section of the Township). Many of the English families became active members of the growing church at Briggs’ Corners.

During this same period, due to a constant increase in the number of congregations, continuous change took place in the circuit containing the present-day Fields Church. Eventually, an Olmsted Falls Circuit was formed, and our small church was assigned to its “saddle preacher.” [At other times, our pastor was shared with the pulpit of LaPorte M. E. Church.]

A “SPLIT” AMONGST THE FLOCK

During the pastorate of Rev. Dissette, in 1875, some eight or nine members of the church, including some whose connection with it embraced a period of nearly 50 years, were expelled for non-attendance. The expelled members, who had “absented” themselves for the reason of “dissent from the doctrines of the pastor,” along with a similar number who sympathetically withdrew

from the church, were organized in February, 1876, by a Rev. Bell, into a class under the name of “Free Methodists.”

Some of the families prominent in the organization of the Free Methodists included members of the Sprigg, Kibby, Collister, Varsey, Neil, and Bainbridge families. Their meetings were held at the local schoolhouse and at the home of Henry Dickson, until they erected a permanent house of worship farther west on Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road), closer to Island Road, in the summer of 1876. This Free Methodist Church, the only one of that denomination in Lorain County, was a fairly short-lived organization, being disbanded by about 1905.

NEW STOREKEEPER & A NEW IDENTITY

An Eaton Township man (of English and Connecticut ancestry), Gilbert Fields, moved his family to Briggs’ Corners in the late 1870’s, and constructed a large Victorian house on the northwest corner of the intersection. The community’s stone water pump and horse-watering trough was situated on the corner of his property. Mr. Fields soon bought and began managing the local general store, which stood just west of the Methodist Episcopal church. (This store, built in about the 1860’s, had previously been owned & operated by a Mr. Peets, then by Julius “Juke” Roberts, Irvin Herrick, and Merrick Bruce – all before Mr. Fields arrived.)

In January 1881, when he received permission to open the area’s first and only post office (1881-1908), the government notified Mr. Fields that another Ohio post office already bore the name “Briggs” – so they assigned the name “Fields” to the new postal

facility. James Nye was the first mail carrier. The community soon became known as “Fields Corners,” and the church – Fields Methodist Episcopal Church (or Fields M. E. Church).

TRIAL BY FIRE

In 1882, under the pastorate of the Rev. Bennias Hushour, the 32-year-old church was repaired and resingled. New horse sheds were built on the west side, between the church and Mr. Fields’ new general store. Everyone was “rejoicing in the improvements.” The refurbished church had been used but one Sunday when, near 2:00 a.m., March 9th, fire broke out in the general store, quickly spreading to the sheds and the church. All were completely destroyed. Gilbert Fields later rebuilt his store and post office on the corner lot immediately east of the church property; and although he was affiliated primarily with the Free Methodist Church (but served 1906 to 1909 as a Fields Church Trustee), his wife – Esther Seeley Fields (1840-1928) – was an active member of Fields M. E. Church for over 50 years, serving as church steward from 1905 to 1913.)

The church building was not covered by insurance, and the members of the congregation were so discouraged that they talked of disbanding. However, they accepted instead the generous offer to use the Free Methodist Church, about half a mile to the west, as a temporary meeting place. A subscription paper was then circulated, and the people responded liberally.

“RESURRECTION” – ANOTHER NEW HOME

An imposing house of worship built in 1836 about 1½ miles east of Avon Center (on North Ridge or Detroit Road, near Jaycox Road) by the members of the Avon Congregational Church, which had stood abandoned for years, was purchased by the Fields M. E. Church members for \$1,500 and dismantled. The timbers were moved to the site of the burned-out Fields Corners building, and the solidly-built wooden framework of this “edifice of massive construction” became the basis of the present structure. Thirty wagon loads of lumber were hauled by five men during the week-long move from eastern Avon to Fields Corners in Ridgeville Twp.

The whole neighborhood turned out in the spring of 1882 to help while the frame was being set up. The “bents” of the frame were so heavy that the men couldn’t raise them above their heads. Henry Southwick, head foreman of the project, let them make several attempts (without success) – then rigged his block & tackle, and the bents were soon in place. Many changes were made to the reconstructed church, and the cost (not including labor) totaled \$1,800. During the rebuilding, meals were served daily by the ladies of Fields M. E. Church. The good feeling aroused by the social life of this event did much to “cement the bonds of Christian love” and to insure the later growth of the church. New horse sheds were also built behind the church (on the west side) soon after the church was finished.

Evidently, the work proceeded quickly; for on June 22, 1882, less than four months after the fire, the Elyria REPUBLICAN (forerunner of the CHRONICLE-TELEGRAM) reported the

following: “The ladies of Butternut Ridge held a strawberry and ice cream festival in the new hall at Fields Corners, last Thursday evening, and although the strawberries failed to arrive in time, they took in upwards of \$80, most of which was profit.”

RE-DEDICATION

Dedication ceremonies for the “replacement” church took place on September 17, 1882, with Elyria’s Rev. Thomas C. Warner performing the service. All debts had been paid in full by this time – a noteworthy accomplishment. Rev. Hushour recorded the names of some of the persons who were most helpful in the enterprise: Joseph Nye, John Brinker, William Palmer, Fannie Blaine, Warren Blaine [grandson of Wilson & Hannah], and Richard Andrews.

The Elyria REPUBLICAN offers a nostalgic look at the Fields Church of 1887 through the following “news” items of that year:

February 3, 1887 – “Sunday, Jan. 23rd the stovepipe in the M. E. church fell down and gave the room a smutty look, but a new stovepipe and a general cleaning has changed the appearance.”

June 30, 1887 – “The strawberry and ice cream festival for the benefit of the M. E. Sunday School a week ago cleared \$9.”

July 21, 1887 – “The M. E. church is receiving a coat of white paint.”

September 8, 1887 – “The M. E. church has been having a coat of white paint, greatly improving its appearance.”

No change of any great import was made to the former Avon church building until the early 1890's. It was at about this time that the church parlors and “wrap-around” balcony were added, to better house the growing weekly attendance & Sunday School classes, and to better care for the social interests of the congregation. In addition, a sheltered entrance was constructed around the front door; but this was removed after about ten years' use. In the early 1890's, a small house was either built or moved immediately east of the church; this residence served for 20 years as a “temporary” parsonage.

REV. DR. G. A. REEDER, JR. & THE ELYRIA HOME

Several years after the brief circuit pastorate of the Rev. Glezen Asbury Reeder (1893-94), his son – the Rev. Dr. G. A. Reeder, Jr., was made Presiding Elder of the Cleveland District. He also visited and preached at Fields Church many times, especially during his six years (1903-1909) as District Superintendent. In about 1906, Rev. Reeder (Jr.) was approached concerning the possible gift to the Methodists of the “Elyria Old Ladies Home” (founded 1896 by Mrs. Mary Lilly). The North Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church accepted this generous offer in 1907, and the property and operation of the Home were transferred to the Church. (Rev. Dr. Reeder, Jr., was later appointed Superintendent of the Home, from 1922 to 1930.)

The name of the Home was changed in 1923 to “The Elyria Home for the Aged”; and in 1935, it became “The Elyria Methodist

Home” (also known as the “Elyria Home”). A new wing completed in 1962 was named “Reeder Hall” in honor of Dr. Reeder’s work. The Elyria Home has since been renamed “The Elyria United Methodist Home” (1968), and “Elyria United Methodist Village” (1994). Our church has supported (in a variety of ways) the good works of the Elyria Home/Village – through most of the last 93 years.

The Union Township Sunday School Association of Ridgeville, Eaton, and Columbia Townships held their “Annual Institute” at Fields Church on March 30, 1905, according to a program from the event. Early in the Conference Year 1906, Fields M. E. Church was separated from the Olmsted Falls Circuit, and first appeared as an independent “station” in the Conference minutes. The Annual Conference of September, 1907 – meeting at the Franklin Avenue Church in Cleveland – assigned the charge “permanently” to the Rev. James P. Mills, our circuit pastor then living in Berea; and the long era of circuit riders at Fields came to a close (after 80 years).

In 1903, the wooden railroad bridge at Butternut Ridge east of Bagley Road was replaced with an iron bridge; in 1909, Butternut Ridge (now also called Lorain Road) was paved for the first time. At a meeting of the Sunday School Board, held March 12, 1911, a motion was made and accepted that the “Sunday School of Fields M. E. Church be organized into a temperance society.”

The Rev. Joseph W. Cleland, reflecting in 1916 upon the recent history of Fields Church, wrote that “... the independent history of the church dates from [1907, when we were made a ‘station’]

... The subsequent history has been one of blessing, especially during the pastorates of C. E. 'Ernest' Reineke (1910-11) and C. T. Goodwin (1911-13) when the church was revived."

A PERMANENT PARSONAGE

During the pastorate of Rev. C. T. Goodwin, in 1912, a beautiful new parsonage was built at a cost of \$3,000, on two acres of land on Butternut Ridge (just west of Bagley Road), purchased on February 15, 1912, from Warren Blaine (grandson of church founders Wilson & Hannah Blain) – for the sum of \$100. Each dollar that was pledged for the project was paid. The parsonage building committee consisted of: Rev. Goodwin, John Wilford, A. W. Palmer, Harlan Blaine, William Andrews, and C. C. Benjamin. The 2½-story house, located half a mile east of the (old) church, was used as a parsonage by twenty Fields ministers and their families for over 60 years.

LOSS OF OUR NAMESAKE

On the morning of February 26, 1912, the community of Fields Corners (and the church) were saddened to lose their namesake, when longtime store-keeper and former postmaster Gilbert Fields, age 72, was killed by the speeding east-bound 20th Century Limited – just as his automobile was halfway across the tracks at Dickson's Crossing (at Root Road, just north of Chestnut Ridge); the steep incline of the crossing making visibility difficult. Mr. Fields had been on his way to the Greenline (trolley car) stop at Root Road, to meet his visiting daughter, Jessie (Mrs. R. P.) Vaughn of Elyria. Gilbert Fields was born in Eaton Twp. in 1839, he married Esther Seeley of LaGrange in 1861 (with the

Dr. William N. Briggs officiating – a son of Otis Briggs), and they had four children. Mr. Fields was an active member of the LaPorte M. E. Church in early life, and then became affiliated with the Free Methodist Church in Ridgeville Twp.; but served 1906-09 as a Fields M. E. Church Trustee. Gilbert & Esther Fields were buried in Fields Cemetery on Butternut Ridge (across from FUMC).

Rev. C. T. Goodwin gave the 1912 commencement invocation for the five graduates of the Ridgeville Township schools (those completing the eighth grade); their motto was “Quality, Not Quantity.” In a report of the 1912 “M. E. S. S. at Fields” (the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School), it was stated that, during the year, enrollment rose to 135 from 116; the average attendance was 77 per week; and the average weekly collection was \$1.25. Balance on hand at the year’s end was \$3.90, and the report was signed by Edna M. Andrews, Secretary.

An interesting printed report of the church Treasurer for 1914-15 shows the annual budget totaling \$1,083 – including salaries of \$800 for Rev. A. H. Perry, and \$60 for the church janitor. There was even an allowance of \$41 for “stoves and pipes.”

IMPROVEMENTS & EXPANSION

Following another near-disastrous fire in 1915, which destroyed the C. C. Benjamin general store and home just east of the church (but thankfully spared the Fields M. E. building), the congregation began discussing plans to remodel the church – and to replace the dangerous heating stove with a modern furnace.

[The burned-out Benjamin store was replaced in early 1916 by a new general store – rebuilt by the Fortune brothers with lumber from the abandoned (circa 1905) and dismantled Free Methodist Church – built in 1876 on Butternut Ridge near Island Road. This third general store at Fields Corners was operated by several storekeepers over the next 48 years (finally becoming a rental house); and, after another minor fire, the building was finally torn down in late 1964.]

Planned improvements in 1916 to Fields M. E. Church included digging a basement (for the furnace), removing the old steeple & erecting a bell tower, and adding more Sunday School rooms to the west side of the church. The building committee consisted of: Rev. J. W. Cleland (chairman), A. W. Palmer, William Andrews, Harlan Blaine, Mrs. Bayard Osborne, and Mrs. Henry Baehr. Volunteers, including Rev. Joseph Cleland, August Rindfleisch, John F. Worcester, and other men of the church, undertook the task of raising the building and digging the new basement.

THE 1916 DEDICATION

The cornerstone was laid on July 16, 1916, by the District Superintendent, Dr. Charles Gallimore. Rev. V.W. Wager of Oberlin delivered the principle address, with the former pastor Rev. C. T. Goodwin and the Rev. Carl Gage assisting. Toward the end of construction, the old bell was reinstalled in the new belfry, and new stained glass windows (bearing the names of the church leaders) were installed. The Dedication took place November 26, 1916, with Dr. E. A. Smith of Ada, Ohio, performing the service. The program for the day, which included a basket dinner in

the new basement and refreshments served by the Ladies' Aid Society, was planned by the Epworth League, forerunner of the present-day UMYF (United Methodist Youth Fellowship). The cost of remodeling was \$9,000; and the remodeled church was dedicated free of debt.

At the 1916 dedication, four of the original 1825-26 members (Mr. & Mrs. Wilson Blain and Mr. & Mrs. John Kibby) were still represented among the Fields M. E. Church membership by their grandchildren and great-grandchildren – the Blains by Mrs. F. Lyndes, Mrs. A. W. Palmer, and Mrs. A. D. Nye; and the Kibby's by Mrs. F. Pratt.

(At this point, the Rev. J. W. Cleland's 1916 "History of 100 Years of Methodism on Butternut Ridge," a major resource for the early history of our church, comes to an end. In his original manuscript, the author closed with the following thought: "The future historian will write the history of an active, aggressive church of today whose loyal people have made possible the progress of the years. This is no time for boasting, but rather a bugle call to the larger service of Militant Methodism, which today challenges every one of its eight millions of members to move into deeper depths of God and more heroic service of men.")

THE WORLD WAR I ERA

Printed quarterly Treasurer's Reports, distributed to each church member during the 1915-1918 period, listed individually about 125 persons or couples, and the dollar amount pledged for each year (these amounts ranged from \$1.00 to \$80.00 annually).

Some of these family names were: Andrews, Baehr, Benjamin, Bainbridge, Black, Blaine, Briggs, Buck, Cleland, Dye, De Lloyd, Eldred, Fields, Fishburn, Fortune, Garrett, Gilder, Grills, Hales, Harding, Hulse, Lang, Lewis, Lyndes, Maddock, Marsh, Mitchell, Nash, Neiding, Nye, Osborne, Palmer, Pratt, Reed, Robinson, Rowe, Scobie, Smith, Stranahan, Symons, Taylor, Terrell, Thompson, Tilberg, Thwing, Varsey, Wait, Wenger, Wilford, Wilkinson, and Worcester.

The Rev. Dr. G. R. Mente of Fields Church addressed an open meeting of the North Ridgeville Grange held at the Town Hall, in September, 1918. He gave a lecture titled, "Around the World with a Camera," illustrated with over 125 "original stereoptican views." Dr. Mente also gave the morning prayer or welcome address at the 1918, 1919, and 1920 Fields Corners "Homecomings." A note on the programs from these celebrations stated that, "All Southwestern (interurban trolley) cars will be met at Stop 54 (Root Road & Center Ridge)."

The Rev. Leroy E. Wright of Fields Church gave the address of welcome at the 1921 Fields Corners Homecoming. An Address titled, "It Pays," was given by the Rev. Bennias Hushour of Norwalk, former pastor at Fields Church (from 1879 to 1882).

THE CHURCH MARKS ITS CENTENNIAL

The Centennial of Fields M. E. Church was celebrated during July 25-26, 1925. Over 250 people attended the services, basket lunch, and dinner. The Rev. G. W. Houk gave his Centennial address twice on July 26th. The former pastors of Fields who participated in the celebration included: Rev. G. W. Houk

(1899-1901); Rev. J. W. Cleland (1915-17); Rev. Dr. G. R. Mente (1917-20); Rev. B. H. Ryan (1922-24); and Rev. Kinsley & Rev. White (1924-25). The Rev. Orlando Pearce (1872-73) and Rev. W. L. Ewing (1903-05) each sent letters stating that they could not attend, but relayed their best wishes for our Centennial event. And a former (supply?) pastor, who previously had preached at Fields M. E. Church, the Rev. Charles E. Helman (living at that time in Buhl, Idaho), also sent a letter of regret, not being able to attend the Centennial; but he stated, "I am glad that some one remembered us all these years, or that the records indicated that I once preached at Fields Corners. I have a fine work here at Buhl; I am closing my fourth year in this appointment, and my thirtieth year in this Idaho Conference."

The Rev. Dr. G. A. Reeder, Jr., of Elyria (son of a former pastor, and organizer of the Elyria Home for the Aged – now the Elyria United Methodist Village), in his letter of greetings and congratulations on the 1925 Fields Church Centennial, stated, "While you are planning to celebrate the past, I hope you will lay the foundations for the future so broad that people one hundred years hence will be celebrating what you did." In honor of the Centennial celebration, Esther Pratt composed a "Centennial Song," sung to the tune of "Swanee River."

FIELDS M.E. CHURCH IN THE "ROARING '20'S"

In the mid-1920's, Rev. Merrill Chaffee and his wife participated in a play, "Safety First," to benefit the Fields Elementary School P. T. A. Mrs. Chaffee's character was the wife of the lead (Ralph Fortune); Rev. Chaffee took the part of "Abou ben Mocha, a Turk."

The first Fields Church wedding after the 1916 remodeling was that of Edward Hensen and Doris Cheesman. The ceremony was performed on October 16, 1926, by Rev. Chaffee. At the Mother-Daughter Banquet in March of 1927, the toastmistress was Doris (Cheesman) Henson. Ten men of the church, including Rev. Chaffee, cooked the meal. And a song or cheer written by Mrs. Chaffee was recited by the honorees:

“Bum-a-lac-a, bum-a-lac-a, ba-ba-ba;
Chic-a-lac-a, chic-a-lac-a, cha-cha-cha.

Bum-a-lac-a, chic-a-lac-a, who are we?
The Mothers and Daughters, don't you see?”

On April 17-18, 1927, the 13-member Fields Church choir, directed by Rev. Chaffee, presented a “Program of Praise” at the Fields and Avon M. E. Churches. The choir was accompanied by a four-piece orchestra (violin, trombone, clarinet and piano). A list of nominations for church trustee, presented to the 1929-30 Conference by the Rev. Hubert E. Cobb, included: Henry Baehr, Lee Andrews, A. Rindfleisch, Miner Eldred, Charles Black, A. J. Hulse, A. W. Palmer, and Frank Sweet.

A small folder printed in 1927 by the Fields M. E. Church branch of the Epworth League (later known as the UMYF or Youth Fellowship, Single Young Adults, and other groups) lists the several young people and their adult advisors who were responsible for the Sunday devotions, from July to December, 1927: Rev. Chaffee, Edward Henson, Agnes Black, Florence Blanck, Olive Taylor [Stranahan], Hazel Watson, Detruva Lyndes, Clarence Bartter, Harriet Andrews, Mrs. Chaffee, Marchia

Lyndes, Hester Taylor, Harvey Blanck, Agnes Pratt, Doris [Cheesman] Henson, Florence Cheesman [Nash], George Taylor, Ona Taft, Della Lyndes [Harding], George Fortune, Jr., Lester Pratt, Leona Brokaw [Austin Loepf], Clarence Fortune, Dorothy Brokaw, and Hazel Reed.

THE “GREAT DEPRESSION” YEARS

Items from the Sunday bulletin for May 15, 1932, included: “From 2:30–3:15 this afternoon, the Columbia Broadcasting System will broadcast (radio) addresses from the floor of the (M. E. Church) General Conference, by Bishops Wang of China, Chitambar of India, and W. F. McDowell (U.S.),” and “Thursday, May 19, the Ladies Aid will hold a strawberry supper in the church. Price 25 cents.” At a Farmers’ Institute held in the Ridgeville Grange Hall in January, 1933, the invocation was given by Rev. Koontz; community singing was led by Mrs. Koontz.

In 1932, the Rev. Dr. George W. Houk (who served our church from 1899 to 1901) died at his home in Lorain, Ohio. Rev. Houk was born in 1848 at Canal Fulton, Ohio, was graduated in 1876 from Mount Union College (earning a Ph. D.), and graduated in 1879 from the medical college of the University of Cincinnati – at which place he practiced medicine for several years. Rev. Houk served over 30 years in the Methodist Episcopal ministry (retiring in 1917) – including nine years’ service at two different churches in Lorain, from 1907 to 1916. He was 84 years of age at the time of his death, and was survived by his wife Della, two sons, and seven grandchildren.

Sunday, May 27, 1934, was the date chosen to observe the 109th Anniversary of Fields M. E. Church; outstanding features of the morning, afternoon, and evening services included: piano prelude & postlude by Miss Agnes D'Lloyd; Junior Choir anthem, "The Old Church Bell"; violin & flute duet by Miss Brevoort and Mr. Bembower of Elyria; the piano and voice program by Miss Velma Andrews and Mrs. J. G. Koontz; the church history, read by Harriet Andrews; the inspiring anniversary sermon by the pastor, Rev. John G. Koontz; a challenging address, "The Task of the Church Today," by Dr. Vernon Wager, Norwalk District Superintendent; and "fittingly concluded" by the soul-stirring program of song presented by the Galilean Sailors' Chorus, of Cleveland.

110 YEARS OF METHODISM AT FIELDS

Paul Wainwright, a frequent guest soloist at Fields Church for over 30 years, sang a tenor solo at the 110th Anniversary service in 1935. The May 12th program also featured a piano prelude by Miss Agnes De Lloyd, and the anniversary sermon by the Rev. Rollin H. Walker of Ohio Wesleyan University. The evening service included Miss Velma Andrews playing the piano, and the program mentioned an upcoming Fourth Annual Pilgrimage to the Elyria Home for the Aged. A contemporary 1935 newspaper account stated that, "The Fields Methodist Episcopal Church goes forward in furthering the spiritual, educational and social interests of the community. The Church advances with the fine co-operation, constant loyalty and prayerful consecration of every member and friend, and by the guidance and leadership of the Master."

In 1938, the church basement was redecorated for a total cost of \$144.50; the exterior of the parsonage was painted, and the first floor was redecorated during the same year. At a meeting held in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1939, representatives and officers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church were all joined together to form the "Methodist Church."

WORLD WAR II YEARS

In the early 1940's, under the pastorate of Rev. Eugene E. Thompson, about one-quarter acre of the parsonage land was sold to the (adjacent) Ridgeville Greenhouse Company for \$125. A new Hammond electric organ was bought and installed in 1944, and the chimes in 1946. [Members of the 1944 Organ Committee were: Mrs. Harold Sweet, Miss Velma Andrews, and Miss Hazel Reed; the Music Committee consisted of: Mrs. V. O. Nash, Miss Velma Andrews, Miss Donna Worcester, and Mr. Robert Kammiller.] Some of the land directly across Lorain Road (Butternut Ridge) from the (old) church was purchased in 1945, to be used for additional parking.

Velma (Andrews) Bainbridge became the "full-time" pianist at Fields Methodist Church in 1938, when Rev. Crawford became pastor (and the church's first full-time organist in 1944). She had occasionally played for Sunday services since 1931, but Agnes De Lloyd was the full-time piano player when Velma Andrews replaced her. Lorna (Smith) Sweet replaced Miss Myra Simms, the part-time choir director, in 1944; and was made the church's first full-time choir director.

Mrs. Sweet was choir director when the first men were added to the group (by then called the Chancel Choir), in about 1960. Both Velma and Lorna had assisted in raising money (house to house) for the first church organ in 1944.

THE "FIELDS MUSIC FESTIVALS"

In both 1947 and 1948, our church hosted a "Fields Music Festival," presented by the "Fields All-Girl Chorus and Guests." The first concert, beginning at 8:00 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 3, 1947, featured three organ pieces by Velma Andrews; two violin solos by Allan Ohmes; a piano solo by Roberta Gaydash; vocal solos by Mrs. O. Lyndes and Glenn Yost; a vocal duet ("Indian Love Call"), by Mrs. O. Lyndes & Mrs. H. Sweet; "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," by the Little Miss Trio; and five numbers by the Chorus, including "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair," "Three Blind Mice," and "Old MacDonald."

The Sunday, Nov. 7, 1948, Fields Music Festival (also beginning at 8:00 p.m.) featured an organ piece by Velma Andrews; two violin solos by Allan Ohmes; a vocal solo ("When I Kneel Down to Pray") by Margaret Lyndes; "Through All the Years," by the Chorus and Trio; and eight more numbers sung by the Chorus, including: "America the Beautiful," "The Wondrous Story," "Take Up Thy Cross," "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit," and "Now the Day is Over"; and the Benediction, by the Rev. Eugene E. Thompson. The Chorus Director for each year's event was Mrs. Harold (Lorna) Sweet.

FIELDS CHURCH AT MID-CENTURY

One wintry night in 1950, the members of Fields Methodist Church were deservedly proud as they gathered to dedicate a new chancel. The ceremony, held February 5, 1950, observed an important milestone in the life of the church. As the ceremonial litany progressed through the dedication of the new lecturn, pulpit, altar, and other elements of the chancel, the congregation glowed with understandable pride. The youthful student-minister from Oberlin's Graduate School of Theology, the Rev. Ralph E. Dessem, shared in their proud achievement. Little did the people realize, however, the extent of the exciting changes and growth to come in the next few decades at Fields Church.

Sunday, July 23, 1950, was the date selected as "125th Anniversary Sunday" – which included an Anniversary Sermon by former pastor Merrill Chaffee (1925-27), and the following Collect for the Anniversary: "O Thou who art the source of all that is our Christian heritage, to Whom the angels continually do sing their songs of eternal praise, accept this, our attempt to give united expression to our individual gratitude. In mercy grant that the happy experience of the past may be but the forecast of the ampler joys of the future, to the glory of God our Father. Amen."

The annual Fields Corners Homecoming held in 1950 was sponsored by Fields Methodist Church, in commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the church. In addition to the traditional softball game (single men -vs.- married men) and the children's & adult's games, the ladies of Fields Church

served a ham supper in the church basement. The 1950 Homecoming concluded with a program including group singing, special instrumental music, historical remarks by Mr. A. D. Nye, and a discourse by Prof. Hilliard Camp, professor of sociology at Findlay College.

THE DISCIPLES CHURCH / “WESLEY HOUSE”

The land just west of the (old) church building, site of the first general store which had burned, was acquired – not long after the 1882 fire – by Mr. T. T. Robinson, who lived across Butternut Ridge Road from the site. By 1890, Mr. Robinson had donated the property to a congregation of the Disciples of Christ Church, which erected a hall there for worship services. The Disciples church was later disbanded, and the building served many years as the residence of James “Big Jim” Robinson; and then it was purchased by Mr. August Rindfleisch – to serve in the 1930’s and 1940’s as a home for Mrs. Emma Rindfleisch’s parents. Mr. Rindfleisch also built a “commercial garage” west of the building. (August Rindfleisch had been appointed as a Trustee of Fields Church in 1919.)

For at least 35 years, the “new” horse or carriage sheds had stood behind & between the Disciples Church and Fields Church – often shared by the two congregations. These horse sheds were purchased and removed in about 1917-20 (by which time autos were becoming common) by Harris Fortune of Root Road, who reused the lumber to construct a storage building on his farm.

In 1952, the Fields Church trustees purchased the Rindfleisch home at a cost of \$11,000, remodeled the former Disciples

Church, and began using the building for additional Sunday School classrooms. It was dedicated on June 7, 1953, and was known as "Wesley House." This structure (over 90 years old) was razed in the late 1970's, after its purchase by Faith Baptist Temple.

Notes from the Fields Church Newsletter of October 1952:

Church School – All of the children are now participating in a mission project whereby they hope to raise \$50 to purchase a goat to be sent to provide milk in Korea. The pre-school children are now meeting in Wesley House.

Young Adult Class – This group is planning to sell commemorative plates on which there will be a picture of our church and also the history of it. At the class banquet held recently at Bess & Andy's [on Center Ridge Rd., later called Chicken Manor, Santa Fe Express, and BW3] the following new officers were elected: Pres., Wm. Lersch; V. Pres., Leo Myers; Sec., Barbara Chalmers; Treas., Russell Reed.

Evening Star Circle – This group recently held a very successful rummage sale. Plans were also made by the group to paint the church basement in the near future.

Wesley House – This is the name given to the house recently purchased by the church. A great deal of volunteer help is needed before the upstairs can be used. If you can help out, please see Harold Sweet, Bldg. Chmn.

Loyalty Month – We hope that every family is using The Upper Room or some other devotional guide each day. A copy of the Nov.-Dec. issue may now be secured in the church vestibule for only 5 cents.

October 1952 Newsletter (continued)

Baptismal Service – On Family Sunday the following children received this sacrament: Brian Charles Harrison, son of Mr. & Mrs. Allen Harrison; Denise Ann Smith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Amil Smith; Randall Burton Williams, son of Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Williams.

Ridgeville's Boy Scout Troop #140 was organized at Fields Methodist Church in February, 1955, with seven boys, by Ford Bainbridge. Mr. Bainbridge, who was active in the church as a Sunday School teacher, greeter, and member of several committees, served as leader of Ridgeville's first Scout Troop for five years; during which time the troop size grew to nearly 40 boys. Several years later, Cub Scout Pack #140 also became associated with our church. Melbert "Mel" McGlaughlin was also active as a community Scout leader in these early years.

On Sunday, July 17, 1955, special notice was made of the 130th Anniversary of Fields Methodist Church. The Rev. Ralph L. Reid delivered a timely sermon, "As We Become Ancestors"; and the choir (directed by Mrs. Harold Sweet, assisted by Mrs. Ford Bainbridge at the organ) presented a special program of music suitable for the occasion.

PLANNING A 1956 WEDDING

When the Women's Society of Fields Methodist Church organized the December 8, 1956, wedding of Norma Sweet & Bob Fortune (7:30 p.m.; 300 guests expected; colors – pink & green),

the menu consisted of: wedding cake (furnished); canapés – chicken, egg, shrimp, cheese & cucumber, and fruit; punch – Seven-up with pineapple sherbet; coffee & tea; nuts; and mints.

Supplies needed for this wedding included: 15 loaves of bread (“Pullman loaf”), sliced lengthwise; 10 lbs. of mints (“too many”); 10 lbs. of nuts (also “too many”); 6 lbs. of coffee; 16 tea bags; 3 gallons of sherbet; 2 lbs. of sugar; 2 quarts of milk; 1 pint of coffee cream; 1 dozen eggs; margarine (2 lbs.); mandarin oranges (1 can); 1 jar of maraschino cherries (red), and 1 jar (green); 2 jars of Kraft pineapple cheese; 3 8-oz. packages of cream cheese; 1 can of condensed milk; 3 (bunches?) of parsley; 2 thin cucumbers; 1 can of pimiento; 8 chickens; 3 bunches of celery; 2 jars of olives; 2 jars of salad dressing; ½-lb. of shrimp; 1 jar of shrimp sauce; Saran Wrap (2); aluminum foil (2); and 7-Up.

Helpers listed for the 1956 Sweet-Fortune wedding were: Betty Bridge, Cleo Myers, Margaret Lyndes, C. Remy, Ellen Kleefeld, Laura Reed, Dorothy Short, Barbara Chalmers, Eleanor Palczer, and Margaret Sigsworth. Expenses for supplies were: \$16.96 for groceries, milk & cream; \$1.76 for shrimp; \$5.70 for sherbet; \$8.00 for 10 lbs. of mints; \$9.36 for 6 lbs. of mixed nuts & 4 lbs. of peanuts; \$4.31 for candles, crepe paper, ribbon, etc.; \$6.57 for 6 cases of 7-Up; \$6.55 for 15 loaves of colored bread; and \$.60 for additional nuts & oranges.

From the Sunday bulletin for December 23, 1956:

Young Adults – The “Young Adults” will meet at the Nelson Nash home on Saturday evening at 8:00 p.m.

SYMPATHY – Our sympathy is extended to Mrs. Underwood and her family in the sudden death of Mrs. Underwood’s father, Mr. Alex Vining.

THANKS! – We appreciate the lovely Christmas decorations made possible by Mr. Austin and Mr. Sweet.

From the Sunday bulletin for Easter Sunday, April 21, 1957:

J. F. Link, Minister; Organist, Mrs. Ford Bainbridge; At the piano, Mrs. Jack Lord; Organist (Sunrise Service), Roberta Gaydash; Choir Director, Mrs. Harold Sweet.

TUESDAY – Women’s Society of Christian Service Meeting and 10:00 a.m. Luncheon at Medina Methodist Church.

SATURDAY – Young Adults Skating Party at Berea Roller Bowl, 8:00 p.m.

EASTER LILIES: given by Mr. & Mrs. A. Underwood in memory of Mrs. Underwood’s Father and Uncle.

CONGRATULATIONS! – Born to Mr. & Mrs. C. Ray Hornbeck, a daughter.

In charge of Nursery at Wesley House today: Hester Taylor, Barbara Chalmers, Betty Bridge, Dorothy Short.

Members Who Joined on Palm Sunday: BY TRANSFER – Mr. & Mrs. George Judy, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Grundy, Mrs. Jennie Groskopf, Mrs. Iva Coleman.

LOOKING AHEAD

Envisioning the need for future church expansion, on October 27, 1957, the congregation voted that the Board of Trustees take all necessary steps to purchase additional property. In 1962, during the pastorate of the Rev. Richard L. Clark – and after years of investigation and consideration, the 8.76-acre parcel of land on which our present church is located was purchased from the Blanck family, at a cost of \$17,500. Later that same year (1962), plans were formulated to establish a drive to raise initial construction funds for the new building. A goal of \$25,000 was set. Through two fund-raising campaigns held between 1962 and 1967 (during the pastorates of Rev. Richard Clark and Rev. Dwight Hayes), the members of Fields Church pledged and paid more than double this initial goal; in addition, over \$13,000 was pledged and paid toward the operating budget.

NORTH RIDGEVILLE'S SESQUICENTENNIAL (1960)

In 1958, the residents of Ridgeville Township voted to form the Village of North Ridgeville, effective in 1959. After a year and a half of village government (the official 1960 population having reached more than 8,000 – far above the required 5,000), residents again voted for a new form of government – and the City of North Ridgeville was established, effective in August of 1960.

Also in 1960, North Ridgeville leaders & many volunteers planned and presented an elaborate Sesquicentennial Celebration. A feature of the commemoration was the religious program on Sunday, August 28, 1960 – including the organ Prelude by Mrs. Ford Bainbridge; the Invocation by the Rev. John F. Link;

and an Anthem, "Praise the Lord," by the Fields Church Choir, Mrs. Harold Sweet, director (all from Fields Methodist Church).

A FIELDS CORNERS "ICON"

In 1961, Mr. Artios Dio Nye (known as "A. D. Nye") passed away at the age of 86. The son of James Nye of Fields Corners, "A. D." was a direct descendant of the Terrell family (pioneer settlers of Ridgeville Township), a top scholar at Baldwin-Wallace College (Class of 1897), a teacher in New Mexico, Missouri, and Dover Township (Cuyahoga Co.), a Ridgeville Twp. Justice of the Peace for 13 years, a well-known strawberry farmer (called the "Strawberry King"), and a long-time Trustee of Fields M. E. (Methodist) Church.

In 1901, Artios and a former college classmate traveled 2,500 miles via bicycle and water; he drove his 1930 Model "A" Ford for 30 years. Mr. Nye was appointed custodian of Fields Church records in 1924, and he compiled (in 1933) the first written history of Fields Corners. He and his wife, Ida Nye (1883-1944), are buried together at Fields Cemetery.

THE POPULAR "CHURCH DINNERS"

An always-popular form of community fellowship at Fields Church has been the church dinner. As far back as anyone can recall, members of various church clubs or committees (usually the women's groups) have cooked delicious chicken, pork chop, ham, and – since 1970 – roast beef dinners; always with plenty of home-baked pies and cakes! They've also "put on" many luncheons & dinners for wedding receptions, open houses,

graduation parties, mother-daughter banquets, etc. As a comparison of income from such events, one wedding reception in 1955 netted a profit of \$72.16 (the charge was \$2.50 per guest); a 1977 reception cost \$4.00 per guest, and brought in \$525.48 profit. Each of these dinners served 175 people.

Several record books have been saved in the church archives which give details (and even some recipes) for dinners served between 1955 and 1980, by the Evening Star Circle, the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), and the United Methodist Women (UMW). At the risk of neglecting the names of many people who also were active in these or other groups during the same period, we list here the women (and some men) who helped regularly with the cooking, serving, or clean-up between 1955 and 1975 only (there are just too many names from 1975 to 1980 to list everyone!) –

Dale Austin	Cleo Myers (Mrs. Leo)
Helen Axford	Florence Nash
Velma & Ford Bainbridge	Eleanor Palczer
Bette & Bert Bridge	Gayle Persic
Jean Brown	Shirley Plum (Mrs. Paul)
Jeane Bungard (Mrs. Ed)	Laura Reed
Joan & Harry Chalmers	Joyce & Bill Reinhart
Lynne Dreger (Mrs. Wesley)	Christine Remy
Marilyn & Jake Elias	Don "Tex" Robertson
Gloria Fink	Mary Rofe
Norma Fortune (Mrs. Bob)	Dorothy Short
Eleanor Gall	Margaret Sigsworth (Mrs. John)
Devona & Bob Grundy	Margie & Tom Sigsworth
Pat Hamker	Flora Smith (Mrs. Amil)

Delores Henderson	Olive Stranahan
Doris Henson	Doris & Phil Trout
Faye Hornbeck (Mrs. Ray)	Lloyd Twedt
Cheryl Huene (Mrs. Charles)	Pat Underwood (Mrs. Al)
Margaret Lyndes	Sara Webb
Alberta Marvin	Jean & Joe Williams
Agnes Mitchell	LaVerne Wolfe
Wave & Charlie Meeks	Shirley Worcester
Charlotte & Harry Morgan	(Mrs. Delbert)

From the Sunday bulletin for May 16, 1965:

ACOLYTES are Jean and June Ashwill. GREETERS at the door are Mr. & Mrs. William Reinhart. USHERS include Harold Wellert, Amil Smith, Tom Sigsworth, Dale Austin.

QUARTERLY CONFERENCE – The Pastor has been authorized to hold a Quarterly Conference in order to ratify action taken at our Official Board session earlier this month concerning the second phase of the Crusade for Funds for a new structure. The Board okayed The Rogers Company of Fostoria, fund-raisers, to conduct a combined every member canvass for budget needs and building fund goals. The Conference will be convened following Worship today at the rear of the sanctuary.

ANOTHER MILESTONE

The 140th Anniversary of the church was celebrated on October 24, 1965, with two services featuring Bishop Francis E. Kearns as guest speaker. At a special fellowship and recognition meal that

evening in the church basement, Mrs. Alta Meyers was honored for her 22 years as lay representative to the Annual Conference, and 26 years as secretary to the Official Board. Also recognized was Mrs. Ford (Velma) Bainbridge, for 21 years as church pianist & organist; and Mrs. Harold (Lorna) Sweet, for her 21 years as choir director. (Mrs. Bainbridge served as church organist until 1977; Mrs. Sweet retired from her position in 1972.) Both women had held many other jobs in the church, from Sunday School teacher to communion steward.

The Rev. Dwight Hayes, who came to the Fields pulpit in 1964, began (in 1967) compiling & editing a regular newspaper column for the local weekly paper, the North Ridgeville LIGHT. Rev. Hayes' column, titled "Shouldn't We," composed chiefly of contributed suggestions from community residents, provoked serious thought on a wide variety of issues – from city operations & much-needed improvements, and the Vietnam War, to more specifically human issues, such as family relationships, morality, and common courtesy. His column was very popular – and sincerely missed, when Dwight left Fields Church in June of 1968.

ENTERING THE FUTURE

On June 4, 1967, following a congregational "procession" down Lorain Road to the new church site, ground was broken for the first unit of the proposed building – across Lorain Road from Fields Cemetery. The firm of Visnapuu & Gaede, Inc., Cleveland architects, designed the church structure. Work progressed through the winter, despite hard freezes and heavy snowfall. Construction of this unit was completed by June, 1968. The total cost amounted to \$210,000. Consecration services for the

new church were held on Sunday, June 9, 1968, following a another symbolical congregational “procession” down Lorain Road, led by the Rev. Dwight Hayes – from the old building (used 86 years, from 1882 to 1968) to the new one.

The June 9, 1968, Consecration sermon was given by Dr. Howard J. Wiant, District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church (Norwalk District). The building committee at that time consisted of: Rev. Dwight Hayes, William Reinhart, chairman, Mrs. Harold (Joan) Chalmers, Mrs. George (Thelma) Judy, Arthur Kistemaker, Carleton “Carl” Purdey, Roy Collins, James Hurst, Theodore “Ted” Peak, Harold Sweet, and Mrs. Robert (Devona) Grundy, Building Fund treasurer. Until completion of the second unit of the church in 1979, Sunday services were held in the Fellowship Hall, with the congregation seated on metal folding chairs. The former church building at Lorain & Root Roads was sold to Faith Baptist Temple, who used it as their house of worship for several years.

Fields Methodist Church had utilized several classrooms in the Fields Elementary School on Root Road during the mid-1960’s. They provided additional Sunday School rooms (along with Wesley House) for the ever-increasing enrollment. This school, in 1975, was renamed “Fields-Sweet Elementary School,” in honor of one of our hardest-working church leaders, the late Harold D. Sweet (1913-1975) – a member of North Ridgeville’s first City Council in 1960, and longtime operator of a large sweet corn farm in North Ridgeville and Avon.

The city’s popular Corn Festival was also begun in 1975, in memory of Harold Sweet. A beautiful (and lifelike) oil portrait

of Mr. Sweet, a popular greeter, committee worker, and church officer for many years, is now displayed in our Narthex. Harold's wife, Lorna (Smith) Sweet, now the "longest" member of Fields Church (69 years in 2000), was Choir Director for many years; and their daughter and son-in-law, Norma & Bob Fortune, are 50-year members as well.

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS FORMED

The years since the new building's construction have seen continuing growth and activity for Fields Church. On April 23, 1968, the Methodist Church joined with the 22-year-old Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB) – formed in the 1946 merger of the Evangelical Church with the United Brethren Church – to form the "United Methodist Church." In September, 1968, our Sunday School classes began using a new series of weekly "church story papers" for boys & girls, titled as follows: "One-two," "Three-four," and "Five-six."

WSCS, COOKBOOKS, & ROAST BEEF DINNERS

On May 10, 1968, at the last meeting held in the old church by the WSCS (Women's Society for Christian Service, soon after to become the UMW), Olive Stranahan presented the group's slate of officers for the 1968-69 year: Julia Wilson, president; Velma Bainbridge, vice-president; Maxine Hayes, secretary; and Sara Webb, treasurer. The motion to accept this slate was carried; and at the June 4th meeting (the first in the new church), the featured guest speaker was Pat Leimbach ("The Country Wife"), and the new WSCS officers were installed by Pastor Hayes.

Between 1967 and 1969, the WSCS gathered, compiled & published a 40-page cookbook (at a cost of 90 cents per book) of the group's favorite recipes – all tried and tested, and many of them actually used at the various lunches & dinners prepared and served by the WSCS. The first Roast Beef Dinner, served on February 21, 1970 (tickets, \$2.50 for adults; \$1.50 for age 5-12; and 50 cents for age 2-5), made a profit of \$365.00.

The Roast Beef Dinner served on November 14, 1970, had 292 advance reservations. Food used (in addition to roast beef) included: 240 lbs. of mashed potatoes (donated); gravy (neck-bones, onions, soup base); 75 lbs. (2 crates) of donated cole slaw (cabbage); 4 large (cans/jars?) of donated applesauce; 25 doz. rolls; succotash (56 lbs. of corn, 8 bags of lima beans); 6 lbs. of coffee; tea; and milk (“1 case – 80 ½ pints”). Cooking guidelines were sparse: “roast beef on by 1:30, done by 4:30; potatoes – some on by 2:30.”

The November, 1970, Roast Beef Dinner dining room team (servers) were: Faye Hornbeck, Shirley Worcester, and Wave Meeks; in charge of coffee was Ford Bainbridge; pies, Olive Stranahan; tickets, Doris Trout; posters, Carol Schick; number caller, Pat Underwood; cleanup, Mr. & Mrs. Ed Bernaciak; and the kitchen team: Devona Grundy, Bob Grundy, Joe Williams, Dale Austin, Sara Webb, Shirley Plum, and Pat Hamker.

MORE POSITIVE CHANGE

Also in 1970, our section of the 58-year-old North-East Ohio Conference became a portion of the newly-formed and larger East Ohio Conference. In June of 1972, the WSCS voted to

change their name to “United Methodist Women” (UMW). During the Rev. David L. Heeter’s pastorate, on June 4, 1972, we all celebrated a “Day to Remember” – being the 5th anniversary of the ground-breaking and the 4th anniversary of the new building’s opening.

That same year, 1972, saw the birth of a new tradition at Fields UMC – the pictorial church directory. Since that time, more pictorial directories have been compiled in 1975, 1978, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1990-91, 1994, 1996-97, and now again in 2000 – our 10th pictorial directory! Immediately following the Rev. Dave Heeter’s pastorate (for a couple of months during 1974), our church was served briefly by a supply minister, the Rev. Coburn Vandersall.

REV. SKINNER COMES TO FIELDS

Soon after the Rev. (Dr.) James G. “Jim” Skinner was assigned to the Fields pulpit in 1974, two more milestones were reached – the membership of the church first exceeded 400, and the new parsonage on Pitts Blvd. was purchased (and completely paid for by the fall of 1975). At about the same time, Fields Church pioneered in the formation of the Community Care Committee of North Ridgville (housed at first in rented quarters at Avon-Belden and Sugar Ridge Roads) – which since has instituted the following services: the Opportunity Shop clothing store (Sept., 1975), a Christmas store (Dec., 1975), and community mini-bus service (March, 1978). On January 8, 1975, the Fields UMW voted to begin supporting the Ken & Darlene Henderson family at Red Bird Mission in southeastern Kentucky.

During 1975, we also commemorated the 150th Anniversary, or Sesquicentennial, of Fields United Methodist Church. To mark that event, Jeff Sigsworth and other members of the Evangelism & Membership Committee compiled the first “detailed” Fields Church history ever attempted – and Jeff (age 20) was appointed Church Historian by Rev. Jim Skinner. (This historical booklet was revised in 1979 for the Consecration of the new addition to the church; once more in 1985 for the 160th Anniversary celebration; and again in 2000, for the 175th Anniversary of the church.)

Mrs. Doris Trout succeeded Velma (Andrews) Bainbridge as church organist in 1977; and Mr. Calvin Critchfield served as choir director during the mid- and late-1970’s.

THE “SECOND UNIT” COMPLETES THE NEW CHURCH

The Charge Conference authorized a new building fund in November, 1975, to pay for construction of the long-anticipated “second unit” of the new church. Cleveland architect Robert Gaede, who had helped to design the original 1968 building, was chosen to draw up plans for the two new church additions. On June 8, 1976, the Charge Conference also authorized the enlargement and (first-time) paving of the parking lot, which was completed in June, 1977.

The Building Committee for the new addition was established in May, 1977, and consisted of: Rev. Skinner, Arnie Swan, chairman, Johanna Lepley, Bill & Joyce Reinhart, Wesley Dreger, Janine Hendricks, Jack McDonald, and Carleton “Carl” Purdey. At a special congregational meeting on March 5, 1978, church

members voted 147-to-6 in favor of the Building Committee's recommendations. The Building Fund Campaign in March of 1978 raised \$150,000 in pledges over the next three years.

GROUNDBREAKING FOR THE NEW ADDITIONS

Sunday, October 29, 1978, was the date of the groundbreaking service for our new sanctuary and educational wing. Members of the congregation lined up around the chalk outline of the site of the new sanctuary, for the Litany of Dedication; then, as a symbolic gesture, each person turned over a spadeful of dirt. Work on the new additions progressed rapidly; and, thanks to immeasurable help from the church members, much time and money was saved.

The new educational wing, with five additional classrooms, was consecrated on September 9, 1979. The first service in the new sanctuary was set for September 30, 1979, and featured a congregational "processional" from the old room to the new. Memorial gifts in the new sanctuary included the beautiful and symbolic stained glass windows, carpeting, chancel/altar furniture, and pews. October, 1979, was proclaimed the month of celebration; and the new narthex, offices, and sanctuary were consecrated at a service held Sunday, October 28, 1979 – just one day short of the first anniversary of groundbreaking. Bishop James Thomas was the featured speaker.

A "QUANTUM LEAP" IN SERVICE BEGINS

Programming at Fields United Methodist Church has been greatly expanded within recent decades. Family camp, golf

outings, full-year confirmation classes, and the ecumenical vacation church school (together with St. Peter's Catholic and the Congregational U.C.C.) were all introduced in the summer of 1976. The Sunshiners group, Junior High Youth Fellowship, and the annual bazaar were started in the fall of 1977. In January, 1977, a part-time children's education worker (Linda Novak) was hired, bringing the total paid church staff to six. A new Rodgers electric organ was purchased in September, 1978, and dedicated on the 24th of that month.

The year 1978 also saw the first annual children's Halloween party; and in December, the Sunshiners crocheted 144 white "chrismons," representing the traditional symbols of Christianity – and purchased a large (artificial, but life-like) tree to hang them on. In May of 1979, the church softball team was started (and was captained by Bob Sigsworth for nearly 10 years); in the fall of 1979 the "Pony Express" stewardship campaign was first used – it was replaced by the "Circuit Rider" campaign in 1984 (for the Bicentennial of Methodism), by home visits and a video-taped presentation in 1985, and still later by "soup & salad" suppers.

EXPANSION CONTINUES INTO THE '80'S

In September, 1980, Sharon Spieth was hired as a part-time Christian Education Director, replacing Ruth Hamilton and Liz Simmons. Sharon's position became full-time in September, 1983. Peggy Dunkel served as choir director in the early 1980's, having succeeded Calvin Critchfield.

Under the leadership of Judy Sainsbury, Sharon Spieth & Karen Karen (Murphy) Sigsworth, the Church Library/Resource Center was reorganized and opened in 1981 (in the former pastor's study, at the east end of the old narthex) – there had been at least two earlier attempts at operating a church library; the first from about the 1930's to the 1950's, and another attempt in the early 1970's. (The Resource Center was later moved, in February–March, 2000, after 19 years in one location, to its present location in the west hall.)

The first annual children's Palm Sunday Fair was held in Fellowship Hall on April 12, 1981. Also in 1981, our church (through the Norwalk District) supplied its first short-term Caribbean missionary, Dave Truman, to Jamaica. We also formed a Missions Committee for the first time in many years.

Videotape equipment was first donated to the church in January, 1982, by Bob & Janine Hendricks. Through Bob's steadfast dedication (and his generous and continual updating of video equipment), our Sunday church services have been filmed and broadcast over the North Ridgeville cable TV station on Wednesday evenings (and more recently, Monday afternoons) for nearly 20 years. In April of 1982, our Charge Conference recommended to the Norwalk District the first two ministerial candidates from Fields Church – Garry Hogue and Lynda Swan (Garry is currently preaching in southeastern Ohio).

Our second short-term missionary, Carol Shaffer, went to Haiti in October, 1982 (our congregation contributed \$800 in one day to help pay Carol's expenses). A picnic pavilion and small tool barn were constructed behind the church parking lot in about

1981. In 1983, our lawn tractor was stolen from the tool barn, but soon replaced. That same year, we began supporting Dennis & Dee Dee Heffner, missionaries at McCurdy School in Espanola, New Mexico. In 1985, a group of Fields Church members visited the school, to give the Heffners some short-term assistance.

In 1983, after our return to a two-service Sunday format, the paid position of Music Director was created, with Ruth Joyce hired to replace Peggy Dunkel. Harold Millard became our third short-term missionary, when he went to Haiti in 1984 (he returned to Haiti in 1985, along with fellow missionary Bob Fortune). A Roof Fund campaign was started in February, 1984, to replace the 16-year-old roof. By the next year, \$26,000 had been raised, and the roof was replaced.

BICENTENNIAL OF AMERICAN METHODISM

The Tuesday morning women's study group began our church's outreach program to the Brookside Hunger Center in Cleveland in 1984; this project was eventually taken over by the Social Concerns Committee. Dan Long, a student at Oberlin College, was hired in 1984 as organist (replacing Doris Trout); 1984 was also the year of the Bicentennial of American Methodism, with its theme – "Celebrating Grace & Freedom." On John Wesley's birthday in June, many of our members joined in a processional walk down Lorain Road to the old church, where we were permitted to hold a special 1784-style service, including period hymns and readings, and to relive old memories.

Several of our members participated in a Bicentennial Convocation in October, 1984, at Cory United Methodist Church in

Cleveland. Our observance of the Bicentennial of Methodism concluded at the 1984 Christmas Eve service, with a six-foot stained glass panel from the old church (featuring the words, “Fields M. E. Church”) being displayed permanently in the narthex. This gift from Faith Baptist Temple was restored and framed by Walt Edwards.

In 1985, Dave & Jean Welty donated to our church its first computer (then called a “microcomputer system”), for office record keeping, producing form letters, and (eventually) Sunday bulletins, monthly newsletters, etc. During that same year, a Men’s Group (the UMM), Young Adult Couples’ Group, and Parents’ Education Group were all formed. Many other events and activities continued in 1985, such as the annual craft workshop, the Fields UMC bowling league, and various Christmas fellowship opportunities.

Members of the United Methodist Men attended their first National (now International) Men’s Congress at Purdue University in 1985; and Joseph A. “Joe” Guy was hired as Music or Choir Director the same year (succeeding Peggy Dunkel). Fields Church membership, which first exceeded 600 in 1982, was nearly 700 by 1985 – and the proposed church budget for 1986 was almost \$200,000.

THE “IRISH EXCHANGE” AND 160TH ANNIVERSARY

During a six-week period in July & August of 1985, Rev. Dr. Jim Skinner and his family, as well as the Fields congregation, were privileged to participate in the “Irish Exchange.” The Skinners visited the United Methodist parish at Knock, Ireland (near

Belfast); while the Rev. Billy McAllister family of Knock visited and fellowshiped with us. We experienced firsthand each other's culture – and learned that, although we all share the same basic faith and language, there are subtle differences (some fascinating; others more sobering) between the lifestyles of the peoples of Northern Ireland and the U. S. This exchange was a unique opportunity to expand our knowledge of world Methodism; and many members of our congregation made lasting personal friendships with the McAllisters – as did the Skinner family with their hosts on the “Emerald Isle.”

The 160th Anniversary of Fields U. M. Church was marked in the fall of 1985; with Sunday, November 17th being the primary day of celebration. Several former ministers were in attendance, a historical slide show narrated by “The Old Timer” (prepared and presented by Jim Sainsbury) and a children's history play produced by Susan Lanning were presented, and the 20- to 50-year members (83 in all) were recognized.

Rev. Skinner left Fields Church (after 12 years) in June of 1986, to take the position of District Superintendent at Steubenville, Ohio. He later served as Senior Pastor of Rocky River United Methodist Church; and in July of 1995 was appointed as the administrative assistant to Bishop Boulton (and later Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton) of the East Ohio Conference.

A BUSY DECADE: LOU DIEHL'S PASTORATE (1986-96)

The Rev. Louis A. Diehl and his family arrived at Fields on July 1, 1986. That same year, the church secretary, Dottie Swan, left the North Ridgeville area – and Judy Sainsbury was hired to

succeed her; and in 1987, another Oberlin College conservatory student, sophomore Dawn Stevenson, was hired as church organist, replacing Dan Long (Dawn served as organist until 1990).

The annual "Search for the Christ Child" program debuted in December, 1987, with nearly 300 people attending; earlier that year, the Missions Committee had hosted the first annual Chili Bowl Cook-Off fundraiser. The annual Palm Sunday Tithe program began in 1988. A second pastoral exchange took place in July-August, 1989, when the Rev. Robert "Bob" Kitching family of Bury, England, traded places with the Rev. Louis A. Diehl and family.

In 1989, the Community Care Committee moved into permanent quarters in a building on Center Ridge Road; Fields Church still helped to support this group with 2-3 rent offerings a year. A new Christian Education Director, Becky Finley, was hired in October, 1989. Oberlin College student Brian Zuro was hired as organist, and Nancy Kelley as custodian, both in 1990 (Nancy replaced Wave & Charlie Meeks, who handled the custodial duties through most of the 1980's). The first annual Fields "Fleatique" yard sale was held on the church grounds in 1991 as a fund-raising project.

Some other Fields Church events or programs initiated during the pastorate of Rev. Diehl were: Joint outdoor summer worship services, with the First Congregational UCC; the Shepherding Committee with monthly breakfast meetings; the annual Leadership Training program (later called Leadership Seminar); the UMM Bowl-a-Thon fund-raiser (1990); Youth Work Camp in New Mexico (July, 1990); "Young at Heart" senior luncheons

and programs, sponsored by the UMW (directed for many years by Jim White); Children's Church (later called Junior Church) during the 11:00 service, started in 1990; and the creation of the James Schlattman Scholarship Fund.

Accomplishments at Fields Church during the second half of Lou Diehl's ministry have included: the ecumenical Community Thanksgiving Choir Concerts (started 1991); summer evening vespers services, in the church pavilion; the first father-son Barbecue/Softball Game (1992), sponsored by the UMM; another short-term mission trip (to Mexico) accomplished by Bill Reinhart and former member Harold Millard (1992); and Jim Reichle & Percy Claycomb's 1993 trip to Nevis – as Volunteers in Mission (VIM). Gayle Hughes was hired in September 1993 as Choir Director, succeeding Joe Guy; and Robert Fitch, an Oberlin student, was hired as interim organist in November of the same year (with Heidi Krukemeyer serving briefly in 1994).

25TH ANNIVERSARY “HOMECOMING” EVENT

On Sunday, November 21, 1993, in joint recognition of the 25th anniversary of United Methodism AND the 25th anniversary of Fields U.M. Church at its “new” location, the Rev. Louis Diehl (along with a well-chosen committee), helped to organize a Fields Church “Homecoming” Celebration. This special event included the recognition (by badges & ribbons) of persons who had been members of the church for 25 years or more; the return of former pastors Dwight Hayes and David Heeter; and a reception in Fellowship Hall featuring dozens of displays of photos &

memorabilia – illustrating the history and activities of most of the committees and groups within the Fields Church family.

Activities offered (or begun) during the last few years of Lou Diehl's pastorate at Fields Church (1993-1996) included: Student Day offerings; UMYF-sponsored Super Bowl Sub sales and paper drives; Blanket Sundays; the UMW's outreach to Hope House; the North Ridgeville Co-op Nursery School; the UMW's participation in Elyria Area Church Women United; the Advent Fair; Tithing Sundays; the Fields "Prayer Chain," Youth for Christ-sponsored events (such as Party at the Park, Gateway Blast, etc.); plus Breakfast with Santa and the monthly Pancake Breakfasts (later known as Country Breakfasts), both sponsored by the United Methodist Men (UMM).

MORE MILESTONES REACHED

Total congregational giving for 1995 surpassed \$213,000 – a record high at that time, according to Rev. Diehl. Terri Hoes replaced Judy Sainsbury as church secretary in 1995. The 10th annual "Chili Bowl" was held in January of 1996 (sponsored by the Missions Committee); it was noted that Jim White had served as Referee for all 10 years.

In February of 1996, we marked 40 years of Fields youth ministry through Scouting – with our church still sponsoring Boy Scout Troop #140 (actually started in February, 1955) and Cub Scout Pack #140. In March, Fields UMC members donated & planted new trees at Liberty Elementary School in North Ridgeville, in memory of Kyle & Brooke Hoffman (who had been killed in a tragic automobile collision).

Church organist Rob Fitch left in June. On Sunday, June 23, 1996, Lou Diehl's final day as pastor (after 10 years' service) was marked with a picnic farewell lunch, with his family and the Fields congregation, at the church pavilion.

MIKE GIBSON ARRIVES AT FIELDS

Pastor C. Michael "Mike" Gibson came to the Fields pulpit on Sunday, June 30, 1996 (when we first met Jan & the rest of the Gibson family); and Justin Berg began his brief stint as church organist in the fall of that year. Fields Church lost its oldest and "longest" member in August, 1996, when Miss Hazel Reed passed away. On Sunday, September 8, 1996, the Council on Ministries (COM) sponsored an open house for all church committees & groups, which placed eye-catching and informative displays on tables set up for viewing in Fellowship Hall, between and after regular morning services.

A special evening program on Sunday, November 3, 1996, titled "Mission in Action," featured slide presentations & talks about our church's mission experiences and opportunities, including: the Heffners' McCurdy School in New Mexico, our VIM trips to St. Maartins and Guatemala, the NOMAD trip by Bill & Joyce Reinhart, the Youth Missions trips & local missions, and the Africa University experience by Bob & Beth Allen.

The late summer & fall of 1996 also saw the continuation of such events or programs as: Fields Fleatigue (6th annual), another pictorial church directory, the Ecumenical Choir Festival (November 24th at St. Julie's), and Search for the Christ Child (November 30-December 1).

Mr. Charles W. Mossman of Olmsted Falls, a native of Bidwell, Ohio, a 60-year public school teacher, and former Sunday School teacher at Fields Church, died at the end of 1993 (at age 93); a special memorial service was held at Fields on January 3, 1997, featuring participation by several family members. Mr. Mossman had read the Bible 30 times, and the Koran twice.

“PHYSICAL RENEWAL” OF OUR CHURCH HOME

In the early spring of 1997, the church membership voted to replace the roof, windows, doors, carpeting, pew seat covers, AND to repaint the 29-year-old church – and obtain a new bank loan & mortgage to finance these projects. Repaving of the church’s parking lot was soon added to the list (approved by the Capital Improvements Committee and the Trustees).

The new carpeting was installed on May 14th, and by the first week of June, many of the other projects were well underway or even completed.

The Fields Family & Friends Committee began sponsoring Tai Chi classes at the church in April of 1997, under the instruction of Harry Finkbone – Karate classes were added later, as well. The July 1997 church newsletter featured “Notes from the Web” (an ongoing column), with recent e-mail messages received at the Fields website, from places such as California, Texas, Germany, and the New Life Community Church in North Ridgeville.

In August, 1997, we welcomed Diane Lynch, who would be serving as assistant Christian Education Director, working with

Becky Finley. That same month, the FUMYF (Youth Fellowship) installed a pop machine in Fellowship Hall – and moved it in November to the church kitchen; profits from this machine went to FUMYF, and the empty cans were recycled to help the Missions Committee.

Longtime church and Sunday School worker Pat Underwood's 90th birthday (which actually was on September 4th) was celebrated with a surprise party in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, September 21st – Pat's reaction was, "... best birthday party I've had in 90 years!"

A "NOTE"-WORTHY ADDITION

Locally-acclaimed piano prodigy (and Oberlin Conservatory student) Spencer Myer, just turning 19, was hired as Fields Church organist in the fall of 1997. We were very privileged to experience Spencer's keyboard mastery for nearly 3 years (when he wasn't participating in occasional out-of-state training classes or national-level competitions – at which he won several distinguished awards & honors). During Spencer's absences, and whenever Fields Church is between full-time organists, we are also privileged to have Nancy Scott as substitute organist.

January of 1998 saw the great "Chili Bowl XII," and the beginning of the ADAPT program (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Training) for youth. In February, the first Lenten Devotional booklet was compiled and distributed to church families – with members of the congregation submitting short pieces of inspirational poetry and prose for inclusion.

Sunday, March 1, 1998, was the date for a special Reconsecration Service, at which we celebrated the completion of the year-long renovation of the church. Former pastors Rev. Dr. James Skinner and Rev. Louis Diehl returned to present messages (and Rev. Skinner led the Act of Re-Dedication), and the morning bulletin featured a list of completed improvements to the church, under the supervision of the Capital Improvements committee and the church trustees.

A UNIQUE JOURNEY OF FAITH

On March 24, 1998, the first meeting of a proposed Debt Retirement Program was held with Mr. Darrell Copeland, consultant for Resource Services, Inc. By May, this program had been officially named "Fields of Faith," and informational meetings were being held at various church members' homes. A special Fields of Faith dinner & program was held June 8th at Crystal Springs on Bagley Road, featuring a new videotape produced by Dave Kennett. The Fields "Prayer Team" was formed during the Fields of Faith debt retirement campaign, as an extension of the Fields Prayer Chain (begun in 1994).

Longtime church member Dorothy "Dottie" Nash of Butternut Ridge died June 30, 1998, at age 72; her surviving husband, Nelson Nash, is now (in 2000) the second "longest" member of Fields Church. Two Fields Church women's retreats (including the January 1999 forgiveness retreat at Camp Asbury) led to the March 28th formation of a new Fields Church women's group, planned by the Education Committee – this group was later named "Simple Abundance" (the members of which were considering, in the fall of 2000, becoming a "circle" of UMW).

The Fields Church kitchen received its first “industrial-strength” dishwasher (a “Champion”) in the spring of 1999 – thanks to the combined proceeds from the spring Roast Beef Dinner (and other UMW projects), the Family & Friends bake sale, some private donations, the Mother’s Day Tea, the United Methodist Men (UMM), and the volunteers who installed the dishwasher.

“YOU SHALL BE FISHERS OF MEN”

In June, 1999, as we marked the first full year of the Fields of Faith program, church member & lay leader Harry Finkbone publicly announced that he had “felt the call,” and that he was considering a career in the ministry. Our June 13th “Celebration Sunday” (featuring a picnic, complete with hot dogs, a balloon clown, “Mark Twain,” and the Lorain County Banjo Band with Millie Imler) celebrated the 1999 high school & college graduates, the Fields of Faith First Anniversary, AND Harry’s announcement of candidacy for the ministry. Also in June of 1999, the Worship Committee authorized the purchase of a Petrov grand piano for \$14,500 – nearly the entire amount had been collected or pledged within one month.

The annual Family & Friends Corn Roast & Picnic was held in mid-July, 1999, in the church pavilion; and in September, a Grand Piano Update revealed that over one-half of the pledged funds already had been received.

In the fall of 1999, Barb Edgerly donated & had installed the access ramp at the entrance outside Fellowship Hall – in memory of her late husband, Walt Edgerly; and the first “Care Packages” to Fields college students & military personnel were

sponsored by the Family & Friends Committee. Also in the fall of 1999, extensive (and beautiful) landscaping of the church grounds was begun by church member Don Hoffman (of Lifestyle Landscaping).

A NEW MISSION STATEMENT

In September, 1999, the Council on Ministries (COM) chose a new Mission Statement for Fields Church, and recommended its adoption (which took place in November): “The Mission of Fields United Methodist Church is to help us all know Jesus.” During the same month (September, 1999), a 175th Anniversary Committee was created, with Billie Robinson as chairperson – to recognize & celebrate the 1825-2000 history of Fields Church.

Our church’s participation in the annual Crop Walk continued in October, 1999, as did our (11th annual) Fields Craft Bazaar. And Saturday, October 16, 1999, saw the 8:00 p.m. dedication of Fields Church’s new grand piano – with a special concert/recital by organist Spencer Myer; videos and CD’s of the program were made available by Dave & Brad Kennett.

In November of 1999, the Search for the Christ Child, Breakfast With Santa, and Ecumenical Thanksgiving Choir programs all continued; and Diane Linch was hired as church secretary (replacing Terri Hoes). Also in November, the COM recommended a new part-time position of Youth Director (which was filled in the spring of 2000 by Penny Smith). New Advent candles were given by Bob & Devona Grundy in December;

and by the close of 1999, thanks to the Fields of Faith program, Rev. Gibson reported that the church mortgage had been “cut nearly in half” since the middle of 1998.

THOUGHTS UPON REACHING “Y2K”

From the January 2000 Fields UMC Newsletter: “Y2K (Year 2000) was made for you! A new year! That’s exciting! Who could have predicted that the 1900’s would have been so momentous? Who could have anticipated the advancement of the last 100 years in science, medicine, travel, computer technology, communication, etc., etc., etc. Problems, fears, and doomsayers abounded. But the promise of new and better things was there, too, for those who paid the price to create them. Ten powerful words can be ours for the Year 2000: ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.’” – Mike

Extra offerings collected in January 2000 resulted in over \$300 for the purchase of hinges, drawer pulls, and cabinet guides, to be used by the Norwalk District VIM (Volunteer in Mission) Team on the small island of Montserrat. Fields’ Bob Culler & Bob Hendricks joined 13 others in this mission experience, with the Missions Committee financing half of their expenses.

In February and March, 2000, the Fields congregation was asked to fill small plastic “arks” with money to donate to the Heifer Project International, to combat world hunger. Also in March of 2000, the church library (Resource Center) was moved – from its 19-year home in the former pastor’s office across from the drinking fountains near the kitchen, to the former classroom next to the new church parlor (and opposite the utility

room); this new Resource Center is also used for adult Sunday School classes and the weekly TOPS meetings. The new room more than doubled the space available to the church library, and freed up the old room for additional staff office space.

Sunday, March 12th saw the first “teen vs. adult volleyball match of the millennium” (sponsored by Youth Council); the teens beat the adults in all three games. A surprise 90th birthday party for choir member Millie Imler was held in Fellowship Hall between services on Sunday, March 26, 2000, with several special guests in attendance. Millie still occasionally performs as featured soloist with the Lorain County Banjo Band.

In the spring of 2000, the Music Committee sponsored the first Fields Concert Recital Series, featuring three Wednesday evening musical programs (open to the public) presented by seasoned and extremely talented musicians; these concerts were very well attended. Sunday, June 4, 2000, was Spencer Myer’s last day as full-time organist at Fields Church – he will be attending the prestigious Juilliard School in New York in the fall of 2000, with a full scholarship; a time of “congratulations & best wishes” was held in Fellowship Hall following the June 4th worship service, and a special quilt made by women of the church was presented to Spencer at that time.

As Pastor Mike Gibson marked the beginning of his fifth year at Fields, the Sunday, June 11th Picnic & Strawberry Shortcake Festival was held in the church pavilion by the Fields of Faith Follow-up Committee – to celebrate the second year of the Fields of Faith Campaign.

The theme for the July 2000 Fields Vacation Bible School was “Holy Word Studios” – the average daily attendance was 52 children, and participants in this special VBS experience sent 17 care packages to Operation Kid-to-Kid.

Becky Finley retired after eleven years as Christian Education Director in September, 2000; she was replaced by Diane Linch, who had been serving as Church Secretary. Evelyn Fontanez, a new member of Fields Church, succeeded Diane as Secretary; and at the same time, Oberlin student Akiko Tsukamoto began as church organist.

FIELDS CHURCH CELEBRATES 175 YEARS

The 175th Anniversary of Fields United Methodist Church was celebrated primarily in the fall of 2000 (Sept.-Nov.) by the Anniversary Committee, chaired by Billie Robinson; with Saturday, November 4th, being the date selected for a special evening Anniversary Service. Every living former pastor of the past 50 years was to be in attendance; a series of nostalgic “history panels” were hung in the west hallway (one or two being added each week) for the 8 weeks preceding the November 4th celebration.

Appropriate historical remarks (given in “175-second” segments by Jim White) and “visual reminders” (including a live pony & circuit rider “Henry O. Sheldon,” i.e., Bob Hendricks) were presented at each Sunday morning worship service during the 8 weeks preceding the Anniversary. A completely updated church history was prepared and printed for the congregation;

and the November 4th evening celebration included remarks by the former (and present) pastors, recognition of long-time church members (184 total 20- to 50-year members, compared to 83 in 1985), many former Fields “family & friends” were in attendance, plus tables in Fellowship Hall covered with more interesting historical displays (and an Anniversary cake!).

All of the above-chronicled accomplishments, struggles, and human success stories can be attributed to the sustained Christian faith, energy, and involvement of a multitude of people who have made countless sacrifices to assure this continued growth. With this strong spirit of selflessness and faith, we at Fields United Methodist Church can look forward to continued expansion in the service of God & community in the decades to come.

J. Sigsworth,
Church Historian
October, 2000

MINISTERS OF FIELDS CHURCH – 1825-2000

Through the past 175 years, the ever-growing congregation of Fields Church has been led by a series of circuit riders & pastors with greatly differing personalities & preaching styles. Every minister, though, left his own mark on the church – not only through inspirational sermons & personal care and guidance in times of need – but also through judicious leadership in expanding church programming & facilities; as well as through countless close friendships with Fields members and their families.

Fields Church has always been blessed to have in its pulpit pastors able to convey to the congregation (each in his own way) a strong sense of faith & trust in God, and in the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. With the guidance and hard work of our pastors, boards & committees, and various other church groups, the generous members of Fields have ministered to those in need – within the church family, in our community, in many parts of the U.S., and around the world.

The list below gives the names & years of service of the 91 men who have led and ministered to the congregation now known as Fields United Methodist Church. The 66 circuit riders or “shared” pastors, and 26 “assigned” ministers (Rev. Mills was counted in both groups), plus several “supply” ministers who occasionally served the Fields pulpit (the Rev. Coburn Vandersall, Rev. John Green, and many others), all have been assisted or even temporarily replaced when necessary by a long list (yet uncompiled) of dedicated lay leaders.

A Chronology of important events is added to this list of pastors.

Ministers of Fields Church (with Chronology) – 1825 to 2000

- (1825) “Blaine’s church class” organized in Wilson Blaine’s log cabin at Bagley Road & Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road)
- 1826-27 Henry Olcott Sheldon and Ansel Brainard

(Rev. Sheldon probably was the first Methodist Episcopal circuit rider to visit Blaine’s cabin, in the area later known as Fields Corners)
- 1827-28 Shadrach Ruark
1828-29 Shadrach Ruark and John C. Havens
1829-30 Cyrus S. Carpenter and H. Colclazer
- (1830) Otis Briggs settled in Ridgeville Twp.; the area near his home and stagecoach inn at Butternut Ridge & Root Road became known as “Briggs’ Corners”
- 1830-31 Cyrus S. Carpenter and (Dr.) Elnathan Corrington Gavitt
1831-32 William Runnels and George Elliot
1832-33 William Runnels and John Kinnear
1833-34 Alvin Billings and James Brewster
1834-35 Alvin Billings and John Wilkinson
1835-36 James Wheeler and Thomas Barkdull
- (1835?) “Blaine’s” congregation began holding meetings at the Briggs’ Corners schoolhouse, a one-room log structure on the north side of Butternut Ridge

(1836) The Briggs' Corners M. E. Church was reassigned from the old Ohio Conference to the newly-formed Michigan Conference

1836-37 Samuel M. Allen and Jonathan Hudson

(The dates of service from 1837 to 1865 are only approximate.)

1837-38 Daniel Conant

1838-39 William Harris

1839-40 M. L. Starr

(1840) The North Ohio Conference was formed; this region included our congregation

1840-41 Leonard Parker

1841-42 William C. Pierce (returned to our church in 1865)

1842-44 John L. Tibbals

1844-45 Hugh L. Parrish

1845-46 T. J. Pope

1846-47 Peter Sharp

1847-48 Zara C. Norton

1848-49 L. M. Pounds

1849-50 Orrin Mitchell

(1850) Briggs' Corners M. E. Church began meeting in its first building, on the southwest corner of Butternut Ridge & Root Road

1850-51 Joseph Wykes

1851-52 N. Worden

1852-53	William Hitchcock
1853-54	John R. Jewett
1854-55	C. L. Foote
1855-56	D. D. T. Mattison
1856-57	Jacob A. Brown
1857-58	Samuel M. Beatty
1858-59	L. F. Ward
1859-60	William C. Huestiss
1860-61	J. W. Redding
1861-62	John Sites
1862-63	Tracy L. Waite
1863-64	George W. Dunn
1864-65	Omar Lawrence (returned to our church in 1895)
1865-68	William C. Pierce
1868-72	James Evans
1872-73	Orlando Pierce
1873-75	O. Milton Ashbaugh
1875-77	Elijah H. Dissette
1877-78	John McKean
1878-79	Newell J. Close
1879-82	Bennias Hushour

(1881) Gilbert Fields opened a post office in his general store next to the church; the Briggs' Corners area soon became known as "Fields Corners"

(1882) The 32-year-old church was destroyed by fire; a former Avon Twp. church was moved and rebuilt on the Fields M. E. Church site

1882-85 Isaac W. Dwier
 1885-88 W. B. Farrah
 1888-91 Daniel Kneale
 1891-93 E. H. Bush
 1893-94 Glezen Asbury Reeder, Sr.

(his son, Dr. Glezen A. Reeder, Jr., in 1906 helped the Conference to acquire the “Elyria Old Ladies Home” – later known as the Elyria Methodist Home [and now known as the Elyria United Methodist Village] – it’s Reeder Hall was named for him)

1894-95 Frank Williams
 1895-96 Omar Lawrence
 1896-99 Henry A. Shook
 1899-1901 George W. Houk
 1901-03 Edwin R. Romig
 1903-05 W. L. Ewing
 1905-06 L. M. Snyder
 1906-08 James P. Mills and Charles McClure

(1907) Fields M. E. Church became an independent “station” with Rev. Mills as first “permanent” pastor

1908-10 Raymond H. Geist
 1910-11 Ernest C. Reineke
 1911-13 Clare T. Goodwin

(1912) The North-East Ohio Conference was formed, including our church; the first Fields parsonage was built on Butternut Ridge, west of Bagley Road

- 1913-15 Arthur H. Perry
 1915-17 Joseph W. Cleland
- (1916) Church remodeled: steeple removed; bell tower, S. S. rooms and basement added
- 1917-20 (Dr.) G. R. Mente
 1920-22 Leroy E. Wright
 1922-24 B. H. Ryan
 1924-25 William M. Kinsley and Harold White
- (1925) Fields M. E. Church celebrates its Centennial
- 1925-27 Merrill A. Chaffee
 1927-31 Hubert E. Cobb
 1931-32 William J. Hodder
 1932-35 John G. Koontz
 1935-38 David S. Carpenter
 1938-41 Lawrence A. Crawford
- (1939) Fields M. E. Church became Fields Methodist Church
- 1941-49 Eugene E. Thompson
 1950-54 Ralph E. Dessem
 1954-56 Ralph L. Reid
 1956-61 John F. Link
- (1957-63) Plans begun, land purchased, and double the required funds raised for future church construction

- 1961-64 Richard L. "Rich" Clark
 1964-68 Dwight Hayes
 1968-74 David L. "Dave" Heeter
- (1968) Fields Methodist Church became Fields United Methodist Church; new building was consecrated
- (1970) Our Norwalk District became part of the newly-formed East Ohio Conference
- 1974 Coburn Vandersall (short-term "supply" minister)
 1974-86 (Dr.) James G. "Jim" Skinner
- (1974-75) New parsonage purchased on Pitts Blvd., 1974; Fields U. M. Church celebrates its 150th Anniversary, 1975
- (1978-79) Construction & Consecration services for the new Phase II addition (sanctuary, offices, and educational wing); church membership first reached 500
- 1986-96 Louis A. "Lou" Diehl
 1996- C. Michael "Mike" Gibson
- (1997-98) Major church renovation & "Fields of Faith" debt retirement campaign started
- (2000) Fields U. M. Church celebrates 175 years of faith, as the world enters the "New Millenium" (2,000 years since the birth of Christ)

LONG-TIME MEMBERS OF FIELDS U.M. CHURCH

The following lists show (in chronological order) those members of FUMC who joined the church 20 or more years ago, together with the date when they became a member. These lists are as complete & accurate as we could make them, based upon existing membership rolls and records.

If any errors in dates, or spellings of names, or omissions are detected, please notify the church Secretary and/or the church Historian.

50-Year-Plus Members of Fields U.M. Church

Lorna (Smith) Sweet	July 26, 1931
Nelson Nash	April 16, 1933
Alice (Smith) Vanek	March 21, 1940
Delbert R. Worcester	April 10, 1941
Russell L. Sigsworth	April 25, 1943
Joyce (Henson) Reinhart	March 25, 1945
Leonard Miles	April 14, 1946
Margaret (Ritsko) Sigsworth	April 14, 1946
Bob L. Fortune	March 21, 1948
Norma (Sweet) Fortune	March 21, 1948
Jean (Gaydash) Williams	March 21, 1948
Eleanor "Pat" Underwood	April 10, 1949
Jane (Palmer) Bender	April 9, 1950
Agnes (Smith) Mitchell	June 18, 1950
Marilyn L. Elias	December 24, 1950

40-Year Members of Fields U.M. Church

Berton S. "Bert" Bridge	April 10, 1952
Gary D. Sweet	March 13, 1952
Amil J. Smith	April 2, 1953
Flora (Harper) Smith	April 2, 1953
Robert Luchsinger	June 21, 1953
Josephine Luchsinger	June 21, 1953
Georgia (Zwieszinski) Austin	February 14, 1954
Clerdon Ray Hornbeck	February 14, 1954
Faye R. Hornbeck	February 14, 1954
Shirley (Pallas) Worcester	February 14, 1954
William H. Reinhart	April 15, 1954
Leona Collins	October 30, 1955
Dale Austin	December 23, 1955
Cheryl (Elias) Huene	March 25, 1956
Melinda (Benner) Foor	May 8, 1956
Harris Hamker	March 3, 1957
Joseph N. Williams	March 3, 1957
Lilian Williams	March 3, 1957
Robert A. Grundy	April 14, 1957
Devona (Myers) Grundy	April 14, 1957
Ralph K. Nash	March 30, 1958
Marjorie Dreger	March 22, 1959
Patricia Hamker	March 22, 1959
William Wolfe	June 21, 1959
Jean (Spence) Kocsis	April 10, 1960
Kathleen "Kay" Spence	April 10, 1960
Wavelene "Wave" Meeks	June 19, 1960
Richard W. Fuller	October 16, 1960
Jane Fuller	October 16, 1960

30-Year Members of Fields U. M. Church

Janet Miles	December 17, 1961
Josephine Fulkerson	February 3, 1962
Violet Smith	November 3, 1963
Carleton "Carl" Purdey	March 22, 1964
Linda Purdey	March 22, 1964
Alvin Fulkerson	May 23, 1965
Diane (Sigsworth) Myers	May 23, 1965
William "Bill" Bender	March 19, 1967
Gloria Fink	March 19, 1967
Wesley Dreger	May 14, 1967
Lynne (Gilder) Dreger	May 14, 1967
Susan (Hornbeck) Taylor	May 14, 1967
Norma Jean Smith	May 14, 1967
Karl L. Hoes	June 2, 1968
Esther Mossman	June 2, 1968
Jeffrey T. Sigsworth	June 2, 1968
Thomas R. Worcester	June 2, 1968
Lorraine Batton	June 9, 1968
Robert Moore	October 27, 1968
Julia Moore	October 27, 1968
Betty L. Palmer	January 21, 1969
Randy Williams	March 30, 1969
Don "Tex" Robertson	May 18, 1969
Mary Robertson	May 18, 1969
David W. Kennett	March 22, 1970
Juanita Kennett	March 22, 1970
Betty A. Lingruen	March 22, 1970
Roy S. Lingruen	March 22, 1970
Chloe Nash	March 22, 1970

Judy Ann Whitbeck	March 22, 1970
Delores (Hornbeck) Hopkins	May 10, 1970
Charlene (Meeks) Stephens	May 10, 1970
Nancy K. Heller	October 18, 1970
Rupert J. "Jim" White	October 18, 1970
Frances L. White	October 18, 1970

20-Year Members of Fields U.M. Church

Dolores J. Henderson	January 31, 1971
Martin C. Austin	May 9, 1971
Carol (Mossman) Andrews	May 9, 1971
Alan J. Worcester	May 9, 1971
Jeane Bungard	November 7, 1971
Helen Gibson	November 7, 1971
Barbara Nealon	November 7, 1971
Michael E. Hosler	February 11, 1973
Sheron E. Hosler	February 11, 1973
Stephanie (Sigsworth) Champion Davidson	March 13, 1973
Margaret Haputa	April 15, 1973
Edna (Hornbeck) Heard	May 13, 1973
Arden Heller	May 13, 1973
Charles E. "Chuck" Bowman	June 3, 1973
Nancy A. Bowman	June 3, 1973
Graydon Snyder	June 3, 1973
Ruby Snyder	June 3, 1973
Johanna E. Lepley	November 4, 1973
Elisabeth J. "Liz" Lamm	December 2, 1973
Margaret K. "Maggie" Lamm	December 2, 1973

Martin Schurdell	December 2, 1973
Pat Schurdell	December 2, 1973
Nancy M. Gavin	February 1, 1974
Gretchen Lund	April 7, 1974
David R. Truman	April 7, 1974
Margaret J. Truman	April 7, 1974
Beth (Elias) Lappin	May 12, 1974
Robert Raines	May 12, 1974
Muriel Raines	May 12, 1974
Michelle (Hosler) Springthorpe	May 12, 1974
Harold Alfultis	September 29, 1974
Joyce Alfultis	September 29, 1974
Charles Alfultis	September 29, 1974
William Shaffer	September 29, 1974
Carol Shaffer	September 29, 1974
Amy Austin	May 11, 1975
Keri (Gibson) Seifert	May 11, 1975
Susan Ramsey	May 18, 1975
Marian (Collins) Taylor	January 24, 1976
James E. Finley	February 8, 1976
Rebecca J. "Becky" Finley	February 8, 1976
Billie P. Robinson	April 4, 1976
Lynn E. Robinson	April 4, 1976
Michael W. Kelley	October 24, 1976
Mary Lou Criss	January 23, 1977
Becky (Criss) Rahija	January 23, 1977
William R. Henderson	January 23, 1977
Cecil E. Simmons	January 23, 1977
Elizabeth K. "Liz" Simmons	January 23, 1977
Carol (Edgar) Green	April 3, 1977

20-Year Members (continued)

Jo-Ell Neuberger Jacobson	April 3, 1977
Terry L. Fortune	April 3, 1977
Tracy (Lepley) Shermak	May 8, 1977
Ed Lyle	June 5, 1977
Nancy Lyle	June 5, 1977
Doris Randall	June 5, 1977
Elizabeth "Beth" Allen	October 23, 1977
Robert E. Allen	October 23, 1977
Terrill "Terry" Kocsis	December 21, 1977
Judy Flickinger	February 19, 1978
Kathy Reece	February 19, 1978
Nancy Scott	April 23, 1978
Judy White	April 23, 1978
John Borecki (Jr.)	May 16, 1978
Stephen C. Hosler	May 16, 1978
Bradley W. "Brad" Kennett	May 16, 1978
Jennifer (White) Smith	May 16, 1978
Linda (Henderson) Stec	May 16, 1978
Mark Purdey	May 16, 1978
Judy Belloma	September 17, 1978
William Belloma	September 17, 1978
Anna Borecki	September 17, 1978
John Borecki (Sr.)	September 17, 1978
Barbara Berry	December 3, 1978
James Berry	December 3, 1978
Carol A. Ferguson	December 3, 1978
William K. Ferguson	December 3, 1978
Julie (Ferguson) Quintana	December 3, 1978
Shirley Buterbaugh	March 11, 1979

Mary Ruth Critchfield	March 11, 1979
Elaine L. Miller	March 11, 1979
John G. Miller	March 11, 1979
Nancy (Alfultis) Mariner	June 3, 1979
Karen J. (Murphy) Sigsworth	November 11, 1979
Dennis Belter	May 11, 1980
Joyce Belter	May 11, 1980
Karen Hamker	May 11, 1980
Raymond Hamker	May 11, 1980
Jerry Toich	May 11, 1980
Shannon (Lyle) Pavlich	May 25, 1980
Kelly Schurdell	May 25, 1980
Melissa (Collins) Tucker	May 25, 1980
David Williams	May 25, 1980
Audrey J. Kirkpatrick	July 13, 1980
Robert W. Kirkpatrick	July 13, 1980
Jayne Poltrone Putrino	July 13, 1980
Ercile C. Eaton	September 14, 1980
Dorothy D. Milan	September 14, 1980
Martin Thompson	September 14, 1980
Nancy Thompson	September 14, 1980
Bonnie J. Barr	November 9, 1980
David H. Barr	November 9, 1980
Nelda G. Haught	November 9, 1980
Russell J. Haught	November 9, 1980
June (White) Worcester	

This 2000 Revision of the Church History
Is Dedicated to the Loving Memory of Grandparents –

John H. Sigsworth (Sr.), 1888-1965
Mabel A. (Worcester) Sigsworth, 1894-1980
David J. Gaede (Sr.), 1908-1985
Elsie M. (Robishaw) Gaede, 1909-1990

– All of whom attended and/or joined
Fields (United) Methodist Church

A Special “Thank You” for Their
Invaluable Assistance Goes to –

Karen J. Sigsworth
Pastor Mike Gibson
Pastor Louis Diehl
Evelyn Fontanez & Diane Linch
Billie Robinson & the
175th Anniversary Committee

And an Extra Special “Thanks” for
His Years of Encouragement Goes to –

Michael Kelley

10-Year Members of Fields U.M. Church

G. David Gillock	February 8, 1981
Beverly "Bev" Gillock	February 8, 1981
Millie Imler	May 10, 1981
Stacy L. (Robinson) Spillane	June 7, 1981
Peggy Fortune	June 7, 1981
Walter A. Edwards	November 11, 1981
Rhonda J. Edwards	November 11, 1981
Sandy Hall	November 11, 1981
Vernon Nicholas	November 11, 1981
Peggy Nicholas	November 11, 1981
William Briggs	November 18, 1981
Annetta Baumiller	December 13, 1981
Ray Baumiller	December 13, 1981
Bob Culler	December 13, 1981
Carol Culler	December 13, 1981