

## **A History of Grace Church**

### ***The Founding (1842 - 1852)***

Grace United Methodist Church can trace its roots back to the very beginnings of the town of Kokomo and its founders, David and Elizabeth Foster. The Fosters came from Burlington, Indiana, to what is now Kokomo in 1842. David Foster set up a trading post on the north side of Wildcat Creek west of the current Main Street. Business with the Miami Indians was good and Foster made a respectable living from it. A few other settlers joined him and a small village of log cabins sprang up.

Elizabeth M. Foster was born in Bath, N.Y. in 1814. As a young child, she came west with her parents and settled in Mooresville, Indiana. There she met and married David Foster. David Foster is often considered the founder of Kokomo. He donated the land for the village and built its first log courthouse. He was the one who proposed that the town be named "Kokomo" after the Miami Indian Chief Ma-Ko-Ko-Ma, with whom he was on friendly terms.

Elizabeth Foster and her neighbors were followers of John Wesley. They met for prayer and worship in one another's log houses. It is thought that it was Elizabeth Foster who invited the Rev. Mr. Jacob Colclazer, a pioneer Methodist minister, to visit the settlement. In 1843, the Rev. Mr. Colclazer helped them organize a church, the first religious congregation in the area. The roster contained ten names: Mr. and Mrs. Adam Clark, Judge and Mrs. N. R. Lindsay, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lamburn, Mr. and Mrs. Dennis McCormick, Mrs. Joseph Sheen, and Mrs. David Foster. In 1844, their pastor was assigned to the church in Rockville (Indiana). He was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. James Burns.

The new church met in the Foster cabin, located a short distance north of the Wildcat on what is now Main Street. Soon they outgrew the Foster home and began meeting on the second floor of the settlement's log courthouse. Later, they built their own log church on what is now part of Foster Park, at the corner of Washington and Superior Streets. They used this church for nearly seven years. In 1845, they organized the first Sunday School in the county. Adam Clark was superintendent, and the average attendance was 15.

(Also in 1845, the Hopewell Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. This church was led by Barnhart Learner, father of J. W. Learner and grandfather of Ellis M. Learner, both of who were prominent Methodist laymen in their time. Whether this group was acquainted with the Foster colony is not known.)

### ***A New Building and New Music (1851-early 1870's)***

In 1851, the congregation sold the little log church building for \$75 and purchased the east half of the lot on which the Grace Church Worship Center now stands. The next year, during the pastorate of the Rev. M. S. Morrison, a modest frame building was constructed on the newly purchased ground. Among the leaders of the building program were Hayden Rayburn, Joseph Sharp and Judge N. R. Lindsay, who gave much of their time and personal assistance to the enterprise. During the Civil War, many patriotic events (complete with fife and drum corps) took place in that building. There were mass meetings to enlist men in the Union Army and anti-slavery rallies. On one occasion, organizers brought a cannon to the front of the church and fired it many times to arouse patriotic enthusiasm.

The church continued to grow, and, at the close of the Civil War, the congregation decided to replace the frame church with a brick building. The building was erected during the pastorate of the Rev. W. S. Birch. The new brick church was the beginning of what was later called the Mulberry Street Church.

The church's new pastor, the Rev. Charles Martindale, was an energetic leader, and he tackled the building's debt. Mrs. David Foster, the church's first charter member, headed the subscription list with a pledge of \$200 (a startling sum in those days). As a result, the church was soon out of debt. Elizabeth Foster continued to be a faithful member and worker in the church until her death in 1870 at the age of 56. (Her husband, David Foster, died in 1877.)

It was in that brick building that the first church choir of any denomination in the community was organized. In those days some people did not believe that music belonged in church, so the formation of a choir was an act of considerable courage. The choir was directed by S. C. Moore. Miss Emma Mason was the organist, and the singers were Misses Hazzard, Moore, and Lindsay, and Messrs. Elliott, Lowe, Kistler and Moulder. While a considerable number of parishioners opposed having a choir, they were solidly outnumbered by those who welcomed singing.

Those who were opposed to music in church were further tested a few years later when a pipe organ was built, and organ music was added to the services. Some of their group, asserting that pipe organs in churches were an instrument of the Devil, cut the organ's bellows and put red pepper in them. However, many church members, and their pastor, the Rev. V. M. Beamer, strongly supported organ and choir music in church, and, ultimately, they won the battle.

Kokomo was not the only place where instrumental music in church created controversy. In some localities, the controversy was called "The Organ War." Peter Cartwright, a religious leader of the time, fought the use of pipe organs and choirs, terming them "high brow music." He held that "the choir destroys congregational singing almost entirely." Notes in church records at the time stated the question as follows:

"Shall we introduce an instrument of music into our churches to guide the songs? The progressive element says 'Yes.' The conservatives say 'No.' The affirmative argues convenience, the negative, conscience. The anti-organ official board members prayed that the church might be delivered from such idolatry. In another place several members quit the church when the organ came in. The efforts to 'pitch the tune' upon some ancient air may not be very devotion-inspiring to the organ lovers, but the mechanical grinding is no less obnoxious to the anti-organ party."

### ***The Church Grows (1873 - 1893)***

In 1873 the Rev. Thomas Stabler, the pastor at the time, led a \$4,500 program to remodel and improve the building. \$4500 seemed to the congregation to be a heavy obligation. Nevertheless, the remodeling was completed and the building was rededicated on June 3, 1873, in a service conducted by Bishop Thomas Bowman. It had a tall spire and a clear pealing bell, which still hangs in the belfry of Grace Church, summoning the members to worship.

Under the leadership of their beloved pastor, the Rev. H. J. Meck, the church experienced a notable revival. The Rev. Meck was a tall, handsome man with a beautiful tenor voice, who was considered a most inspiring preacher. The revival he led added one hundred and fifty members. In 1883, less than a generation after the controversy over adding music to church services, the Sunday School had an orchestra, led by Edgar Meck. Its members were Miss June Reed, violinist; Mrs. Lucy Moulder, organist; Thomas A. Ogden, cornet; Prof. Manning, viola; and A. H. Lehman, trombone and flute.

In 1886, natural gas was discovered in Kokomo, and the population boomed. The Rev. C. H. Brown, the pastor in 1886-1890, formed a second Methodist congregation in South Kokomo. The Southside church took the name Markland Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, and the parent church located downtown elected to be called Mulberry Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1892, during the pastorate of the Rev. J. S. Bitler, a noted evangelist who had conducted a rousing revival service in Mulberry Street Church a few years before, the congregation became so large that the church could not accommodate all those who desired to attend. Because of the business depression of that year, the trustees did not believe it prudent to build a new building. Instead, they had the south end of the building torn out and a frame tabernacle added. The addition extended back to the alley and had a seating capacity of five hundred, which met their need for space for three years.

### ***A New Building***

In 1893, the annual conference selected the Rev. W. D. Parr as pastor of the Mulberry Street Church. As he had a reputation for erecting a church wherever he was stationed, the congregation took his arrival to mean that they would soon be building a new church. Early in 1895, initial plans for a new building were developed, and by August, the invitation for construction bids was made. The Armstrong Landon & Hunt Company of Kokomo won the contract. The company's architect, Robert Young, drew the plans. Mr. Young directed the work on the project, along with Milton P. Somers and Lora P. Hutto. Mr. Somers, a millwright, took charge of constructing the interior furnishings, including the pews. Mr. Hutto, a brick mason, helped in the masonry construction. In an interview years later, he noted that it took five to six months to complete the new church building.

Construction of the new building meant that the old Mulberry Street Church building, which had a strong place in the congregation's hearts, had to be torn down. The demolition proceeded rapidly, however. But where would the congregation worship in the meantime? About three years prior to this, the famous evangelist Sam Jones had come to Kokomo. No church in the city was large enough to hold crowds of the size that attended a Sam Jones revival meeting, so the community built a tabernacle for him on the south side of Monroe Street between Main and Buckeye Streets. The tabernacle was of the old "Saw Dust Trail" variety and the ground on which it was built was held in such reverence that when the Mulberry Street congregation realized that it must seek a place of worship in the interim, between the demolition of the old church and the completion of the new, it selected the ground for "Grace Tabernacle."

On October 7, 1895, the large cornerstone of the new building was laid. The weather was beautiful, and the ceremony was elaborate and impressive. The program was directed by Chaplain Charles C. McCabe, a veteran in handling such exercises. The great stone at the northeast corner of the building was hoisted into place with McCabe wielding the trowel. It was an intense moment as the stone was lowered into place.

A copper box was sealed and placed in a chamber in the cornerstone. The box contained:

- The Official Roster of the church and the Epworth League
- The minutes of the last meeting of the North Indiana Conference
- A copy of the last DePauw University yearbook
- Recent copies of the Western Christian Advocate, New York Christian Advocate, Epworth Herald, Methodist Almanac, Kokomo Tribune, and Kokomo Dispatch
- A small ball of silk carpet rags containing the names of the members of the Rev. R.D. Wilcox's Sunday School class who, in just 18 months, had raised more than \$1000 for the building fund through socials and by sewing more than 2000 pounds of carpet rags.

Under the leadership of the church's pastor, the Rev. W.D. Parr, and the church's presiding elder, the Rev. M.S. Marble, the board of trustees oversaw the building of the new house of worship. The Board of Trustees included:

- J. F. Elliott - President
- Dr. J. McLean Moulder - secretary
- J. W. Learner - treasurer
- A. Charles
- K. McElwee
- E. E. Springer
- S. C. Moore
- L. Moulder
- G. E. Meck

The new building had its main entrance on Washington Street. As the building neared completion, and excitement over the beautiful new worship environment grew, the trustees elected to give the church a new name, Grace Methodist Episcopal Church.

Work progressed swiftly through the summer and fall of 1896. Finally came the long-awaited dedication. On Friday, December 4, the new organ was dedicated with a memorable organ recital by Prof. Henry Eyre Browne of Brooklyn. The crowd was so large that the collection totaled \$533.

As Sunday, December 6, 1896 dawned, the people of Grace Methodist Episcopal Church gathered for a sunrise prayer meeting with the Rev. W. W. Martin followed by an old-fashioned class meeting led by the Rev. F. M. Stone. At 10 a.m. the auditorium was opened and worshippers took their seats. Platform, choir box, and every nook and corner were filled with chairs. Charles McCabe, who had led the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone the year before, was now Bishop McCable. He conducted the worship service preceding the formal dedication. The Rev. Charles H. Payne of New York delivered the sermon.

The dedicatory services continued through Thursday. Members of the church looked over their new home and agreed it exceeded their expectations. The total cost of the building was \$33,000.

Upon its opening, the new church became the focus of major gatherings in the city. As its auditorium was the largest in Kokomo, it was the scene of concerts, lectures, conventions and many other large-scale assemblies. The church building became the community center for cultural programs.

Meanwhile, the city of Kokomo had acquired a central heating plant, so the old hot air furnace in the church was torn out and steam heat was installed. When natural gas began to wane in Kokomo, electric lights were also put in. A ten-foot sewer was constructed below Washington Street, giving the church sufficient drainage, and the basement was remodeled.

### ***The People of Grace Methodist Episcopal Church (1890's - 1941)***

Among the interesting figures in the church at this time was Caswell Sharp, and Johnny ("Pappy") Stewart. Mr. Stewart would, with stern disapproval, move out of the amen corner (a row of chairs on each side of the pulpit where older men sat) when he disagreed with something. He would depart with sufficient commotion to insure that all eyes were fixed on him.

There were, also, the Rev. Joe Saylor, small in stature but eloquent as an evangelist, and the Rev. Edward T. Gregg, who was pastor for two years and three months and who had an unsurpassed record of officiating at weddings. He had a reputation of having married more couples than any other pastor of the church next to Father Rayburn, who was supposed to have blessed the union of more than 1,000 couples. Dr. J. McLean Moulder, who became secretary of the Board of Trustees, was one of the period's picturesque figures. He was head usher and wore a rose when wearing flowers in the buttonhole was uncommon.

The late 1890's saw one of the most faithful Sunday School teachers to that point. He was Matthew Murden, and he taught in the Bible school for more than thirty years. He is said to have never missed a Sunday in all that time. It was an astonishing record in those days.

Fairly steady progress was made after the dedication of the new church. The membership at that time was about 700. It rose to 870 in 1900 and in the next six years increased to 1,000. This was the period of the memorable revivals and so successful were they, that by 1913 the church had more than 1,200 members.

The pastor in 1915 was the Rev. Dr. W. B. Freeland. He was said to be an exceptionally graceful speaker, who had a strong command of the language and a powerful intellect. (Photo: Grace Church circa 1908)

Dr. William T. Arnold, who came to Kokomo in 1919, was a tireless and enterprising leader whose painstaking efforts toward expanding the membership and his congenial nature were perhaps his outstanding characteristics. He was succeeded by Dr. F. F. Thornburg, and then Dr. J. W. Potter. A powerful and dramatic speaker, Dr. Potter was a forceful and convincing minister, who preached vigorously. He strove to be an example of all that he preached.

The period of outstanding preaching continued with the Rev. S. H. Turbeville. Here again the church experienced steady, responsible leadership. Mr. Turbeville's gentlemanly manner was coupled with his insistence on the Bible being interpreted literally. He was a man of much dignity but also one with a dry sense of humor, a trait shared by all the pastors in this notable period.

Dr. LeRoy W. Kemper, pastor from 1934 to 1941, held the ministerial post for seven years, one of the longest tenures in the church records. He was a tall, gracious man whose imposing stature and kindly, genial nature are deeply engraved in the church's memory. He handled the pastor's duties single-handedly, as there was no associate pastor at the time. During his ministry the greater part of the church's \$15,000 debt was liquidated and nearly 600 persons were added to the membership rolls.

### ***The Centennial (1940's)***

With the coming of a new and vigorous pastor, the Rev. Jesse W. Fox, in 1941, and the approach of the church centennial, new objectives were planned. The parsonage at 209 North Webster Street was remodeled and its rooms modernized. The new minister urged his congregation to celebrate the 100th anniversary of their church in 1944 by raising a Centennial Rehabilitation Fund to point up the church building where repairs were needed, to carry out some remodeling and to install a new pipe organ.

On September 11, 1944, the church was badly damaged by a fire believed to have been the work of an arsonist. The basement was gutted and four pews in the auditorium were destroyed together with part of the carpeting and floor. Repairs, costing approximately \$30,000, were rushed in order that the sanctuary could be ready for the Centennial celebration in October. The loss from the fire was covered by

insurance. During the period when repairs were under way, the church held its services in the Masonic Temple a block away.

Celebration of the centennial in October, 1944, was one of the church's shining occasions. The congregation went all out to observe the historic date. An elaborate, six-day program was organized, including an organ recital by Prof. Van Denman Thompson of DePauw University, an historical pageant depicting the origin and development of Methodism in Howard County, and addresses by Mrs. J. D. Bragg, national president of the Women's Society of Christian Service, Bishop Titus Lowe of the Indiana Methodist Area, former Grace pastors L. W. Kemper and S. H. Turbeville' Bishop Alexander P. Shaw of Baltimore, Dr. Henry Hitt Crane of Detroit, and Roy L. Smith, editor of the Christian Advocate. A history of the church, tracing its beginning to a wilderness log cabin on Wildcat Creek was published.

An outstanding member of the congregation at this time was Mrs. John (Eos) Richardson, who wrote the historical pageant marking the centennial celebration in 1944. The play was directed by Mrs. Frank (Mildred) Kern.

Thelma Atkinson was minister of music and MaryBelle Stewart of Evansville was employed as director of religious education. Rev. Fox was a delegate to the Methodist General Conference in Kansas City.

In 1944, Rev. Fox reported 159 new members and the total membership was approximately 900. A significant event that year was a vote by the trustees to have the church affiliated with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

In those days, "sitters" caring for nursery children received \$1.50 a Sunday. Today, young adults, some of them college students from Indiana University-Kokomo, oversee the nursery and are paid at the rate of \$9 a day.

Charles A. Wells, a widely known writer and editor of a weekly newsletter called "Between the Lines," drew capacity crowds with a series of Holy Week lectures. He returned in 1949 for another series and proved to be one of the most stimulating speakers ever sponsored by the church.

Thelma Atkinson resigned in 1946 as minister of music to accept a similar post at High Street United Methodist Church in Muncie, and Mahlon B. Mercer, director of music in the Kokomo Public Schools, was named to succeed her. Among the most active persons in the music program was Mrs. W. R. (Vivian) Morrison, who later was to purchase a set of White Chapel (English) hand bells and donate them to the church.

Financial affairs of the church were handled by Dallas Andrews, Clyde Hill, Roy Harper and Bertha Taylor.

Able leadership in the pulpit featured not only the 1940s with the Rev. Thurman B. Morris, but also the 1950s with the Rev. Donald E. Bailey, the two ministers who followed in the footsteps of Jesse W. Fox. Thurman B. Morris, a hearty, bustling young preacher who had filled a Methodist charge at New Haven, Indiana, was senior minister from 1948 through 1951. He was exceedingly popular with the congregation and in the community. The Kokomo Rotary Club elected him as its president and he figured prominently in civic and community causes. In appreciation of his leadership, the congregation financed a trip to Europe as a gift to him.

### ***A New Organ in 1949***

In April 1949, a new pipe organ built by the Skinner Company of Reading, Mass., was donated by Mrs. Cressie Thomas Havens. At the same time this organ was dedicated, the church acknowledged other

significant gifts including mass cathedral chimes donated by Mrs. Emery Hopkins, the parsonage at 503 West Taylor from Mrs. A. P. Chester, a communion table from Ralph Ehrman and a piano from Mr. and Mrs. M.E. Hicks.

All did not go well with the Skinner organ. The Skinner Company was close to bankruptcy and Rev. Morris spent many days in Reading making sure that the money donated for the organ went into its assembly and not to any other use.

When Donald E. Bailey was assigned to Grace Church in 1951 it was a homecoming for him since he was born in Kokomo and knew many of the church leaders before he assumed the pastorate. The Bailey family's first experience in the Webster Street parsonage was under trying circumstances because of a leak in the roof, and unfortunately it was during the rainy season. This parsonage was the pastor's home until the stone residence now on the site was built.

In his first year in Kokomo, Rev. Bailey went to the Methodist World Council meeting in Oxford, England, having been chosen as a delegate before moving here. The Rev. Sheldon Duecker, now Bishop Duecker, was assistant pastor and Mrs. Ella Bogue was church secretary.

One of the new pastor's first problems was to help decide whether to restructure the parsonage, which was in great need of repair, or to build a new one. The congregation decided to erect a new one. D. A. McIntosh, father of Mrs. Margaret Chester, was chairman of the building committee.

A highlight of the Bailey pastorate was a pulpit exchange that brought an English clergyman, the Rev. W. Davis Evans, to Grace Church and sent Rev. Bailey to the Davis church in Brighton, England. For several weeks, the Grace congregation heard the word of God expounded from an Englishman's viewpoint, and the Brighton parishioners enjoyed an American's look at the Christian story. It proved to be a move that strengthened good will and understanding between religious interests from two nations.

### ***Addition of the Education Wing in 1957***

Returning from England, Rev. Bailey was involved in plans for an addition to the church. This was the educational unit built on the east side of the church in 1957-59. Kenneth Williams of Kokomo was the architect and the cost of the project was \$360,000. Sunday School classes that had made use of any corner of the church they could find available were delighted with the comfortable, roomy and well lighted new classrooms. There was a general recognition of the new wing's importance to the church youth and to Christian teaching.

During this period the church faced a moment of decision when an African-American doctor and his family applied for membership. While the church had never had any racial reservations for membership, the experience was new to everyone and some opposition to the application arose. Rev. Bailey vigorously supported the family's request and a strong majority of the congregation agreed with him. The church thus adopted a precept that there would be no prejudice because of race, as far as membership was concerned.

In addition to Sheldon Duecker, others who served as associate ministers during the Bailey era were Thomas Wiegand, Benjamin Antle and Charles Johnson.

An interesting episode at this time was a congregational debate over replacing the church pews. M. Earl Hicks, a leading layman, offered to underwrite the installation of new pews of an individual seat size and design. While the offer was appreciated, a majority of the membership preferred to retain the straight type wooden pews. These are the pews now in use.

Don Bailey was one of the most effective and persuasive preachers Grace Church has had. Members admired the clarity and profound nature of his sermons and he became one of the church's best loved pastors.

The Morris-Bailey era was notable for some of the most remembered Sunday School teachers in the church's history. Four of them were Howard D. Berkeypile, Sam Martindale, Ellis Learner and Lloyd McClure. Berkeypile taught the Baraca Philathea class for more than thirty years. Among the more recent teachers with long careers of service were Mrs. Mildred Kern, who taught for forty years; Marguerite Widner (thirty-five years); Mrs. Eula Lightfoot (twenty years); and Dr. Warren McClure (ten years). In an earlier era, Mrs. Julia Parr Naftzger, daughter of the Rev. W. D. Parr, was a prominent and popular teacher in the church school.

John M. Sayre, successor to Don Bailey, had a dry wit that delighted the congregation. He was renowned among his fellow ministers for his gift of humor and was a favorite speaker at the annual sessions of the North Indiana Conference. He began his ministry here in 1961 and served through 1964. During his tenure a committee was formed to investigate the purchase of a new pipe organ. At issue was the question of whether to buy a new one or repair the Skinner organ. Asked for a recommendation, the church choir expressed the opinion that the instrument in use was not worth repairing, and it was generally agreed that replacing it was desirable.

### ***Another New Organ***

In 1962 a contract was signed with the Austin Company of Springfield, Illinois, for the installation of a new organ and the old one was sold for \$400. The same year saw a decision to have the church bell cut up and removed since it was not being used. This involved some emotion, for the bell, which had been cast in Kokomo, was a sentimental object.

Two years later the church acquired a residential property at 4841 North Parkway as a home for the associate pastor. In the same year, 1964, a tall, congenial and outgoing minister came to Grace Church as John Sayre's successor. He was Samuel E. Carruth, who had been at Trinity United Methodist Church in Evansville and whose lively personality and sweeping gestures in the pulpit made him an unforgettable figure in the memory of the congregation. His pastorate extended into 1967 when he was replaced by the Rev. Ben Hershberger. Under the latter's leadership the 125th anniversary of the church was celebrated.

A memorable event during Pastor Carruth's stay in Kokomo was the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The Grace minister was attending choir rehearsal and was about to leave the church when the custodian, who had been listening to his radio, broke the shocking news to him. The city of Kokomo was stunned along with the rest of the nation, and the local newspapers and radio station manager called him and other clergymen for statements. He was one of six ministers who made radio messages for repeated airings during the tense period after the slaying.

After Dr. King's murder, a large outpouring of citizens formed a march to Carver Center, the community's African American gathering place, to demonstrate their sadness over the crime. The crowd of marchers was quietly reverent, expressing the grief of people of all races. The following Sunday was Easter and 1,100 people filled Grace Church, paying tribute to Dr. King. It was a heartening reflection of church people's compassion.

Dr. Hershberger, now retired and living in Sarasota, Florida, remembers an occasion when a racial riot broke out at Kokomo High School. There were some injuries and the downtown section of Kokomo was



closed off. Several youth from Grace Church were instrumental in organizing a convocation of students from both races and they settled the dispute themselves, bringing a peaceful end to the disturbance.

At this interval the church moved to increase its pastoral personnel by forming a multiple staff of ministers, which included the Rev. Howard Fox and the Rev. Marvin Jones as assistants to Rev. Hershberger. At the time of his retirement, the latter had completed forty-three years in the ministry.

Dr. Donald Barnes became senior minister in 1970 and preached his first sermon in that capacity on May 3. He had been superintendent of the Kokomo District five years before moving to the Grace Church pulpit.

A jovial man, Don Barnes had a rich store of jokes, many of which he told on himself. He enjoyed weaving humorous stories into his sermons and wherever one encountered him, whether at church or on the street, he had something funny to relate. His hearty laugh brightened many an occasion for his parishioners.

The Hopkins tower chimes were a popular sound in the 1970s. Ringing at noon and again at 6 p.m., they brought much enjoyment to downtown visitors. The church discontinued ringing them around 1990 since their sound conflicted with that of chimes in other downtown churches.

### ***New Worship Schedule Adopted***

In 1971 a change in the times of the Sunday morning worship services was made. The first service was held at 9 o'clock and the second at 11 o'clock. The first Sunday this change took place brought out an attendance of 583 for the two services.

It was in this period, also, that the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) changed its name to United Methodist Women. Through 1993, the Grace Church UMW was led by four co-presidents, Mrs. Donald Fields, Mrs. Rolland Buell, Mrs. Jack LaRue and Mrs. Al Wald. New officers, elected in September 1993 are: Mrs. Warren McClure, president; Mrs. Don Brinkerhoff, vice president; Mrs. Al Wald, secretary; Mrs. Ronald King, treasurer; and Mrs. Rolland Buell, assistant treasurer.

Organized in five circles, the UMW concerns itself particularly with missionary work. Its main events are the fall bazaar, a spectacularly successful money-raising event, and the Mother-Daughter banquet. The five circles are named Faith, Hannah, Mary, Rebecca and Ruth Miner. The organization made plans, in late 1993, to form two additional circles.

The UMWs objectives are "to develop a creative, supportive fellowship and to expand concepts of mission through participation in global ministries of the church."

Support of missions has always been in the forefront of Grace Church activities. In the early 1900s giving to missionary causes averaged \$500 a year until 1913 when it reached \$1,500. From 1918 to 1922 the church responded to a program for increased world service, raising as much as \$10,890 in 1922, a substantial amount in those days. Today the church contributes to missionary work at the rate of \$20,000 a year.

This support covers local, national and worldwide missions directly and through the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Direct aid goes to missionaries and/or missions in Brazil, Japan, India, Haiti, Africa, and Appalachia in the United States. Funds and supplies also are sent to disaster areas in America and abroad through UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief).

### ***Personal Service a Hallmark***

Personal activity by individuals from Grace Church has marked many instances of missionary zeal. Volunteers from Grace have visited Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Africa, Asia and Jamaica as well as Mississippi and other U. S. states.

Two physicians from Grace were among those who made personal contributions in the 1960s and 1970s. Dr. Thomas E. Conley gave obstetrics training to doctors and midwives in eight Asian countries in 1965 and in 1977 Dr. Donald Fields replaced an African doctor in Zaire while the latter was in training at Methodist Hospital, Indianapolis.

Aid to have-not peoples has been extended in many ways. Five Grace volunteers helped build a parsonage in Puerto Rico in 1973. Four others took medical supplies to a children's hospital in Haiti in 1983, and in 1985 five from Grace joined in building a parsonage for a black church in Indianola, Mississippi.

Similar volunteer work contributed to the building of a Methodist school in Monrovia, Liberia; the repair, rewiring, plumbing and painting of the dining hall, cabins and medical clinic at the UM Church Camp in Mameyes, Puerto Rico (twelve Grace Church people were in this party of volunteers) and construction of a home economics building at the UM Koidu Secondary School in Sierra Leone, Africa.

The foregoing projects were carried out during the past eighteen years, along with others such as improvements (in 1988) at a youth camp in Brazil where additional rooms, mattress covers and beds were provided; construction of new cabins at the UM Camp Lakewood; and repair and painting of a church and building of a new dormitory in Jamaica in 1992.

Concerned by the poverty they saw in Jamaica, Mr. and Mrs. John Snead organized a relief project for a small school where the children had only scraps of paper and cardboard to write on and had little or no clothing. School supplies, clothing and money were collected for the Sneads to take to Jamaica in 1994.

The "brother's keeper" spirit manifested itself in another way in 1988 when four Grace members helped in the construction of the new Trinity United Methodist Church in Elwood, after the old church was destroyed by fire. During 1992, United Methodist Men worked on a home in Kokomo for Habitat for Humanity.

In a similar good-will mission Rev. James Davidson, Grace's associate pastor, spent several weeks in 1993 helping a congregation in Campina Grande, a village in Brazil, build a temple. His experience there gave him an indelible impression of the devotion of people speaking different languages but united in Christian faith.

### ***United Methodist Men***

The UMW's counterpart, United Methodist Men, was organized four years ago, with William Simpson serving as president the first two years, Warren Cox headed the group in 1993, and Scott Williams was president in 1994.

In addition to cooperating with Habitat for Humanity, United Methodist Men work with United Methodist Women in the fall bazaar and assist elderly church members in their home needs. At its monthly meetings the organization invites speakers to discuss such topics as law enforcement, community morals, Christian principles, etc.

A new activity introduced in 1971 was the Greeters program organized to welcome people coming to worship services. At the outset, 102 persons were commissioned to exercise this function and the program did much to enhance the "caring" spirit of the church.

In 1972, Rev. James Andrews was assigned as an associate pastor to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Marvin Jones. An improvement Fund Crusade that year raised \$95,275 to relocate the church offices, redecorate the sanctuary and pay for a fire alarm system. This program also covered remodeling of the former office area on the main floor into Sunday School classrooms and remodeling of the north end of the basement.

Dr. Wilburt Littrell came to Grace Church as senior minister in 1974 and the assistant pastor was O. Gene Smith. The Littrell pastorate continued for six years, until 1980 when Dr. Wesley Breshares succeeded him. Dr. Littrell had been superintendent of the Lafayette District before coming here. For some time there had been sentiment in the congregation for the installation of a chair lift at the foot of the steps to the sanctuary near the east entrance. This sentiment now grew stronger and attracted the attention of Mrs. Anna Fox, widow of the Rev. J. W. Fox. She decided to make the gift of a chair, and it proved to be a welcome convenience to handicapped and elderly persons. When the new elevator was installed in 1987 there was no longer a need for the chair lift and it was removed.

### ***Bus Station Acquired***

Dr. Littrell proposed that the church acquire the Indiana Bus Station property east of the church and after some negotiations this was accomplished. The ground and building were purchased for \$50,000, the bus depot was demolished and the ground was used for parking.

Through the years, repairs to the church building were a constant need. Walls had to be caulked, hallways painted, drapes replaced, windows caulked, kitchen faucets fixed, roofs patched, and so on ad infinitum. Dr. Littrell and the trustees coped with these problems as did every pastor and board of trustees. Minutes of the trustees' meeting through the years were filled with accounts of repair problems.

Periodically, the sanctuary needed redecorating. One of these times was in the 1970s when the Schanbacher Company of Springfield, Illinois, was employed for such a program. Funds to meet the cost were raised through special giving, with no solicitation through visitation. Sixteen years later, during the pastorate of Walter L. Mayer, a massive restoration program was to be launched and successfully carried out. It resulted in the beautifully appointed sanctuary we enjoy today.

Dr. Wesley Breshares, who had been senior minister at the First United Methodist Church in Plymouth, Indiana, served Grace Church briefly in 1980. Health problems led to his resignation, and he was replaced in 1981 by Rev. Mayer, who came to Kokomo from Lafayette where he had been pastor of Christ United Methodist Church.

The church was hit by fire again in 1983, the second most serious fire it has experienced. This occurred on Feb. 12 in the kitchenette area on the second floor. Damage amounted to \$40,000 and would have been much greater had not the blaze been discovered as early as it was.

### ***Arrival of Walter Mayer***

The arrival of Pastor Mayer signaled a dynamic period in the life of the church. A man of extraordinary energy and an agile wit, he became noted for the intellectual quality and witty content of his sermons. Word of his excellent preaching spread and church attendance soared.

In 1984 the new pastor proposed that the church explore the possibility of air conditioning the sanctuary and Hilda Currens was appointed chairperson to pursue the inquiry. For a time, the heavy cost of such a venture delayed its implementation but eventually the church was air conditioned, to the enthusiastic reaction of the congregation.

The beautiful stained glass windows in the educational wing came into being in this period. The ones located on the Mulberry Street side were the gift of Hilda Currens, who presented them in memory of her husband Ross. They were designed and made by Marion Malone. Six windows in the chapel were given by Alice Sellers Hazelwood in memory of Don Sellers.

An audio system to improve the congregation's reception of church services and an emergency lighting system were installed, adding to the many conveniences the church was providing.

The church cottage at Lake Webster was the subject of much discussion throughout all the years after it was acquired. It was continually in need of repairs, and different boards of trustees found it one of their perennial problems. There was some sentiment for selling it, but more groups and families began using it and it became increasingly popular. The church decided that it was an asset that should be appreciated and any disposition to part with it subsided.

Of significant interest at this time was an appraisal of the church real estate and structure. This was done by professional appraisers and the congregation learned with pride that the worth of its property was placed at \$3,375,000. A dozen years later, a new evaluation raised the worth, to \$5.1 million.

Madrigal dinners, started in 1967 and always an exciting event at Grace during the Christmas season, were marked by a high quality of vocal and instrumental performances. Many visitors, in addition to church members, attended and enjoyed them. They were discontinued in 1989 after the retirement of Kathryn Conner as minister of music. She had been the guiding force in the success of the event.

A strong sense of fellowship in the adult Sunday School classes has prevailed throughout the history of the church. One who was impressed by it during her residence in Kokomo was Nancy Mayer, wife of former Pastor Walter L. Mayer, who compared it to "an extended family" for the members.

The church provided a new parsonage for the Mayers, selecting a residence at 2800 Rockford Lane. The purchase price was \$82,000. From the date this house was acquired in 1982 to the present, it has been a center for receptions honoring new members as well as other events.

### ***Sanctuary Remodeling in 1987***

Probably the biggest step taken during Pastor Mayer's seven-year stewardship was the major sanctuary restoration in 1987. The program started as a vision in the minds of several members of the congregation who formed a committee headed by John Harvey, with Jim Williams and Ron Gill as key participants. The move followed a task force study led by Ron Harper in 1983. A building committee headed by Ted Conner set out to raise \$650,000 to finance the program, and topped that goal by securing pledges amounting to, \$706,000. Much of the credit for the success of this drive went to Dale Kingseed as chairman of the finance committee.

A contract for the restoration work was awarded to William Bassett & Associates, an engineering and architectural firm in Kokomo. Bassett is a longtime member of the church and a former trustee. His work, making the sanctuary seem brand new and beautiful, was a masterful accomplishment.

Serving with Conner on the building committee were Jean LaRue, Kay Michael, Dan Bourff, Don Colvill, Harvey Corn, Jerry Hodges, Mike Rodgers, John Snead, Cora Stewart and Dale Kingseed.

While some feared the heavy cost of the project was beyond the congregation's means, the congregation not only exceeded the goal but paid off the debt in two years.

The objectives in planning the restoration were to make all of the church accessible to all its members and make it more useful, more comfortable and more attractive. The new elevator, which was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Williams, was to be the heart of the desired accessibility. The newly designed chancel area was to give greater flexibility to service planning, and the sanctuary's beauty and comfort were heightened by new carpeting, lighting and air conditioning.

Many structural changes were necessary for the elevator's installation. Changes in the educational wing improved the Sunday School room layout. Christian education offices and a conference room were added. The Mulberry Street entrance was made more beautiful with attractive wooden doors and the same design carried through to the chapel and sanctuary entrances. New landscaping and lighting greatly enhanced the exterior.

In the sanctuary the redesigned chancel area featured a platform with all furnishings movable. New and comfortable seating was provided with upholstering of the pews, and new carpet was laid over the entire sanctuary floor. New lighting, especially under the balconies, further brightened the sanctuary.

The year 1984 also saw the acquisition of smoke detectors, one each being installed on the second and third floors and two on the first floor. In the same year the North Parkway parsonage was sold to Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Smith, and a search for a new parsonage was begun.

Walter Mayer was pastor seven and one-half years, and under his leadership Grace Church strengthened its standing as a Division One church in the North Indiana Conference. "Added Grace" was started and became a forum of fellowship for senior citizens. It is continuing as an active and popular organization.

Religious pilgrimages have been a popular activity for church members in recent years. During the Mayer pastorate, for example, there were travels to the Holy Land, Egypt, Great Britain and Greece. Pastor Mayer and Associate Pastors Rick Frahm and Val Harris were participants in them. Rev. Frahm was associate pastor in 1980-82 and Rev. Harris from 1982 to 1989. Rev. Harris was responsible for a significant addition to the efficiency of the church office by introducing data processing equipment which modernized the record keeping system.

The youth ministry at Grace Church had been a recurring concern for the church leadership. There have been several eras in which strong youth programs flourished. One of them was a period in the early 1970s when a vigorous activity known as the Mod Squad was immensely popular. Among its leaders were John Rothwell and Dick and Judy Emory. It was a program that aroused such enthusiasm among young people that youth from all over Howard County joined those from Grace Church in making it a successful venture.

Today, Mary Ann Orr is youth director and Marcia Aurand is director of children's activities. Marcia's responsibility is for children up to sixth grade. The church has been placing increasing emphasis on children's activities, recognizing their importance to the church of the future.

### ***Walter Mayer becomes District Superintendent***

Pastor Mayer's service as senior minister continued to 1988, when he was appointed superintendent of the South Bend District. The congregation, confident of the church's preeminence in the North Indiana Conference, was determined that the high quality of its pulpit be maintained and the pastoral relations committee asked the conference bishop to assign a topflight minister to replace Rev. Mayer. The bishop

responded by naming the Rev. Charles I. Johnson, who had been associate pastor at Grace in 1957-1960 and now was superintendent of the Logansport District. Rev. Johnson began his pastorate in 1989.

The new minister, youthful in appearance and in spirit, won quick approval with his clear cut, challenging sermons and warm personality. His fondness for hymn singing resulted in Sunday services being liberally interspersed with hymns.

After Charles Johnson became pastor in 1988, the China Clipper restaurant at the southwest corner of Mulberry and Buckeye Streets was purchased by the church and the spacious parking lot we now have was built. The parking lot, opened in 1990, took on more and more importance as church committees, classes and individuals used it increasingly, greatly enhancing mid-week activities.

As a logo, the church adopted the phrase "A Caring Place," applying it to the church's interest in the life outside the church as well as to the welfare of its members. The church bus was sold and a fifteen-passenger van was acquired. The van was immediately popular with many groups in the church, adult and youth alike, and is in continual use.

Among the memorials in recent years was a set of 144 chairs for Fellowship Hall which was purchased from donations to the church Memorial Fund and dedicated to the memory of Pauline (Mrs. William) Kearney. Equipped with leather seats and backs, the chairs added a comfortable feature to the hall as the scene of many meetings, dinners and other programs.

There were other gifts memorializing individuals who had made an indelible impression as members. They included orchestra chimes presented by Mr. and Mrs. Al Wald in memory of their daughter, Holly Schafer; two large hand bells given in 1991 by Mrs. June Van Bibber in memory of her husband Ward; a bass hand bell presented in 1992 by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Burkhalter in memory of their son Mark; and several hand bells provided from the church Memorial Fund in memory of Amy Evans.

### ***Exterior Renovation***

A significant step was taken in 1993 with the adoption of a plan for repairing the church exterior. The program's cost, estimated at \$120,000, constituted another major financial undertaking. Accustomed to special fund raising, the congregation moved into this program confidently, proud of its ability to meet whatever need arose. The newest project involved repair and waterproofing of the entire exterior masonry, replacing brick and mortar where there had been deterioration, and so on.

Another enterprise of which the church is proud is the Academic Scholarship Fund to assist persons pursuing advanced education in vocations that support the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church. This fund grew more popular as the years went on. Much of the original funding came from a bequest in 1975 from Mrs. Candace Delon in memory of her son Jack. In 1993, twelve scholarships were awarded, and in some years prior to that, as many as sixteen have been granted. This program was headed by Mrs. Allen (Dorie) Maxwell as chairperson.

In the spring of 1993, the present associate pastor, the Rev. James Davidson, arrived as the replacement for the Rev. Chris Madison, who was appointed senior minister at the United Methodist Church in Knox, Indiana. A young man of unusual energy, Chris was popular in the community because of his numerous talents, which included musicianship. For example he was an excellent violinist and in that capacity was a member of the Kokomo Symphony Orchestra. Rev. Davidson had been at the Mulberry, Indiana, United Methodist Church and before that had served at Noblesville and Lafayette.

Planning for the celebration of the sesquicentennial of Grace Church in 1994 began in the spring of 1993 with David Foraker as general chairman. Other members of the sesquicentennial committee were Mrs.

Donald Snider, William Kearney, Steve Alley, Rolland Buell, Ron Harper, Thelma Eichholz, Robert Wall, William Brown, Mike Rodgers, Larry Raber, Dow Richardson, Marcia Aurand and Barbara Bourff.

Such, then, is the story of Grace United Methodist Church, one of the great churches of Indiana. It now enters its sesquicentennial year, healthy in purpose, financially sound, inspired by a proud and dynamic membership, conscious of its mission as an instrument of Jesus Christ. With confidence in the future, it proposes, as the Caring Place, to carry the beacon of Christian love and compassion for many more generations.

### ***Our Pastors and Membership***

Charles “Chuck” Johnson served as our pastor during the sesquicentennial observance through 1999. Rev. Johnson served our church well for eleven years following a stellar life in ministry serving our Conference in everything from the Conference camping ministry coordinator to a time as a District Superintendent. Chuck retired in 1999 and was honored as the keynote preacher at Annual Conference at the Annual Service of Memorial. Dr. Gary Forbes was our next pastor, serving until 2003 when our current pastor, Stephen Beutler, became senior pastor. Once again, the Annual Conference brought to us a strong pastor with a great presence in the pulpit. Gary Forbes did much to help our congregation understand the joy of our salvation through his emphasis on the theological implications of grace in our lives. Since our churches name is Grace United Methodist Church, Gary’s preaching and teaching on the subject of grace was found to be both inspirational and prophetic. Because of Dr. Forbes strong intellect, teaching skills, and challenging messages, Grace Church experienced four wonderful years under his leadership and guidance. We are grateful for his contribution to the theological and social outreach of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our midst.

The Annual Conference has found Grace United Methodist Church to be a congregation that, throughout its history, offers a great job in helping new young clergy become mentored into Christian service as pastors. Over the years, pastors who have served at Grace as Associate pastor have gone on to become some of strongest clergy in our Annual Conference– including one who was elected a bishop from our jurisdiction. Serving as associate pastors in recent years have been Jim Davidson 1993-1997, Mike Butler 1997-2001, Karen Altergott 2001-2003, Rob and Grace Marie Ransom 2003-2006, Chris Roberts 2006-2009 and arriving in 2009, Stacey Fischer Gehring. While our associate pastors have not had long tenures with us on staff, we have been proud that, because of their experiences with us at Grace, they have become better prepared to serve other churches in our Annual Conference. We celebrate that the leadership of our denomination has been able to recognize their strengths for ministry during their time with us in ministry.

An interesting side note on Pastor’s Rob and Grace Marie Ransom: Our church was invited to take part in a “Residence in Ministry” program that was instituted by the Eli Lilly Foundation. The program, fully funded by the Lilly Foundation, selected the best newly graduated seminary students from around the nation and assigned them to larger churches that they felt could effectively mentor and prepare these new pastors in preparation for ministry. As their first appointment. Rob and Grace Marie were sent to Grace as associate pastors with their salaries paid for by the foundation. The program required that the assignments at the church rotate around the various specific areas of church administration and leadership, enabling them to have a first-hand experience doing the varied duties required of a minister of a larger church. It was the goal that, as a result of this two-year experience, these new seminary graduates would be better prepared to pastor churches and may be able to be appointed to mid-size to larger churches within the conference that are in need of strong, young clergy. Pastors Rob and Grace Marie Ransom not only presented sermons but also served on the various committees of the church

during their two-year tenure with us. With Pastor Steve and our church leadership as their mentors, they had a valuable learning experience. Following their tenure with us, they were accepted in the Pennsylvania Annual Conference where Pastor Grace Marie's family lives. They are enjoying a fruitful and exciting ministry there. We are proud of their accomplishments with us and look forward to hearing more about their ministries in the future.

Also on staff throughout this past decade has been Rev. Larry Newberg, a retired local employee who is also an ordained pastor who has endeared himself to our whole congregation – but especially with our older members and shut-ins. Larry also participates often in our worship services on the Sundays when he is able to be with us. Larry and his lovely wife Marleta have contributed much to the life and ministry here at Grace Church over these years. While we celebrated Pastor Larry's retirement from ordained ministry in 2008, he continues his role as Visitation Pastor with us and is greatly appreciated.

Our present membership of 650 is committed to living up to the objectives that are printed each Sunday in the bulletin. Our Vision statement says,

“Grace United Methodist Church is a Christ-centered fellowship called to offer the best we can possibly give to God, as we care for our community and the world

- through worshipping, glorifying and honoring God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
- inviting all to grow in the knowledge of the Lord,
- living a Spirit-filled life through our actions and words,
- offering the love of Christ to everyone.”

### ***Our Missions Ministry***

Grace UMC strives each year to meet our mission commitments for our world, nation, and local concerns. We celebrate that under Pastor Steve's guidance, the generosity of our members, and a strong Mission Ministry team, we have become more mission-minded than ever before.

We support two missionaries in overseas ministries. They are Dr. Dennis Marke, a Medical Missionary in Kissy, Sierra Leone, and Reverend Ken Vance, a Missionary who also directs the “Wings of the Morning” ministry as an airplane pilot. Rev. Vance is assigned to the Ndola, Town Center, Kafakumba Pastor's School, Africa.

We are also excited about our support of a local missionary, Reverend Jeff Newton who coordinates the Kokomo Urban Outreach ministries. Rev. Jeff Newton's ministry of Kokomo Urban Outreach helps people in at least 10 different poverty areas of the city. Through Sunday evening cookouts, Vacation Bible Schools, a food pantry and clothing room, Buddy Bags, and a recent program called E.A.T. (Everyone Ate Today) programs consists of food distribution, training for young parents, teaching of mothering skills, opportunities for tutoring youth, computer classes, as well as dance, art, and recreational activities. Our members help both financially and with personal involvement to make these projects successful.

An ongoing ministry of Grace Church is our “Yellow Bag ministry. Yellow plastic bags with a list of foods and other needed products placed inside are provided to our congregation who take home the yellow bag and purchase items listed. The filled bags are then returned to the church to be distributed. Four local ministries are the recipients of these items: Kokomo Urban Outreach, the Rescue Mission and Open Arms, which is a home for homeless women and children under the auspices of the Rescue Mission and CAM.



Our location as a downtown church and our proximity to the Kokomo Rescue Mission affords us the opportunity for service to persons in need. We are pleased to be able to host the annual Community Thanksgiving meal along with our community sister churches and the Kokomo Rescue Mission. Nearly 800 people have been provided a Thanksgiving Dinner during the past years. We are also grateful to be able to provide help for CAM (Coordinated Assistance Ministry), a ministry for less fortunate persons who ‘fall through the cracks’ of the care systems of our community. Throughout the year we help with CAM ministries and especially enjoy hosting the CAM Christmas party for needy families of our Kokomo community. Many other areas of support are offered through our Mission outreach ministries – too numerous to mention.

Our missionary efforts extend to individual and group activities. The United Methodist Men provides a group of very committed men who go to Henderson Settlement in Kentucky yearly. They provide supplies and do various building projects needed by the mission. The Youth also participate on a Mission Trip every other year. Through our Endowment Fund, the Mission Ministry Team selects laypersons from our congregation that we send to a mission field to help – and see first hand – how our financial support is making a difference in the lives of people throughout the world. Our Church sent Chuck Hefley to Sierra Leone. Shirley Hoy has made two trips to the Bright Star School in Kenya, Africa. And our Youth Director, T.J. Knowland has received support from us to do mission work in Togo on two occasions as well. Other members have gone on church-sponsored trips to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Mexico in recent years.

We are grateful that God has made it possible for Grace UMC to provide funding for world, national, and local missions that total over \$ 100,000 to \$130,000 over past three years from 2006- 2008

### ***Our Facilities (or Facilities at Grace)***

Because of the foresight and generosity of Elizabeth Handley and others of our congregation, an endowment program has been established at Grace UMC that provides additional funding for building improvement, new programming, cultural events, and missions. This amount was invested and only the interest generated is being used for the various areas where the Trustees have proposed to the Administrative Council to give the yearly income:

10% of the entire income to be added to the corpus

Of the remainder:

60%—Building Improvement Fund, under the guidance of the Trustees

20%—New Programming Fund, under the guidance of the Ad Council. Any new program proposed by a ministry team of the congregation may be funded through the new programming fund on a sliding scale for 5 years.

10%—Missions Fund, under the guidance of the Mission Ministry Team

10%—Cultural Events, under the guidance of the Cultural Events Sub-Committee. Events that the Cultural Events Fund have helped sponsor over the years of its existence are the following:

- Ernie Haase and Signature Sound – National renowned Southern Gospel Quartet with roots with the Cathedral Quartet.
- Becky Archibald – award winning pianist and composer who has family connections without our congregation (Hart family). Her concert at Grace UMC was before her Weill Recital at Carnegie Hall, New York City.

- Steve Green – Well known soloist and Christian Gospel singer.
- Michiana Vesper Choral Group and Orchestra – The performance of “The Magnificat” by three classical composers. Concert was performed at Grace UMC in Kokomo and at a church in South Bend, Indiana. Combined the professional choral group and orchestra with Grace UMC Altar Choir.
- Twilla Paris and the World Vision Korean Children’s Choir – sponsored by the Billy Graham Association.
- Ken Medema – a blind composer/musician with national reputation who offered us a Saturday evening concert and was guest music and worship leader on Sunday morning worship service.
- Dr. Ben Witherington – Theologian and biblical scholar from Asbury Theological Seminary who is the Religion consultant/contributor to various national news media organizations.
- Caedman’s Call – Youth oriented Gospel Rock band.
- Danny Funderburk and Mercy’s Way – Southern Gospel trio with a national following.
- Andrew Peterson’s Christmas Show – A special Christmas musical celebration with various well-known Christian music artists.
- American Boy’s Choir of New York City – Nation’s oldest and most renowned boy’s choir. They have sung many of the recent Presidents and international competitions.
- Point of Grace – Well-known Christian Ladies trio with a following among the Country Music scene as well.
- Newfire: A Husband/wife singing duo and worship leading team
- Ben Shive – Soloist/composer/worship leader who writes music for many of the well-known Christian musicians of our day.
- The Grace Dinner Theater presented a dinner followed by a play acted by church members and directed by Ann Bradshaw. This was another special treat that was provided by our Cultural Events Committee

Monies from the endowment and other bequests were also used to provide a much-needed three-year building improvement fund endeavor. We have made significant changes to the church building and brought the facility up-to date for ministry into the 21st century. The project was funded with 1/2 of the funds from the endowment and 1/2 of the funds generously donated by members of the congregation over a 3-year pledge campaign. Part of the remodeling effort in the lower level included the remodeling of the kitchen area. This turned out to be a “from the ground up” task as the floor was removed to accommodate up-to-code plumbing and then a new tiled floor was installed. Walls were removed to incorporate the two adjoining rooms into much needed storage facilities. This change also provided space for two freezers, an icemaker, and other needed improvements. New appliances were purchased including ovens, a stove, and a warming oven. New cupboards were built and new storage carts for dishes were purchased as well.

The former bank building at 212 West Walnut Street, across the alley south of the church, was purchased in 2004. It was adapted to become our new office area for our church and staff. Upon completion of this much needed addition to our facility, the former office and music areas of the church were vacated and a committee was appointed to determine how the lower level could be redesigned for maximum church use. Bill Bassett was appointed as architect with Chuck Hefley overseeing the construction. Most of the work was contracted to firms but some of our people volunteered their work as well.

With the new remodeling efforts completed, space was now available on the lower level for Church School classes, a larger music room, a new and improved library and an auxiliary meeting room. New

restrooms were installed and existing ones modernized. Another major undertaking was the installation of a new boiler and kitchen exhaust system for the entire church.

The much-used Fellowship Hall was carpeted using removable, cleanable carpet squares. The ceiling was redone, new wiring and lights installed, and, with the redone ceiling, the lovely stained glass windows were uncovered to be enjoyed by everyone. Bill White built a beautiful buffet/cupboard on the south wall that is an attractive addition as well. With our round tables to encourage visiting and our newly redecorated room, it is now a true Fellowship Hall.

In 2009, the building at 216 W. Walnut Street, adjacent to our office building was purchased. Our Youth Director, T.J. Knowland, moved into the apartment upstairs. Wonderful uses and ministries are planned for the downstairs. Phil Montgomery, our Church counselor, will be able to have more privacy for his various counseling appointments, the youth are looking forward to conducting their "Mid Week" meetings there, and Kokomo Urban Outreach has plans for many programs and ministries to occur in the facility for our inner-city neighbors. A downtown office for Jeff Newton has also been provided in the space.

### ***Music at Grace***

William H. Brown, our long-time and much loved Minister of Music, retired in 2005. Members of our congregation, Pam Lyons, Arlene Buell, and Barbara Hobbs helped keep our music program strong during the interim period. From April of 2006 until June 2009, Randy Manning came to serve as our Director of Music. Upon Randy's departure to be closer to his family, Barbara Hobbs expanded her duties and became Director of Music Ministries as well as pianist/organist in 2009 and Rev. Stacey Fischer Gehring added the directorship of the Adult Choir to her pastoral duties.

In early 1995, the Chamber Ensemble was organized and directed by Jacqueline Hunt. The original group consisted of musicians from 7th grade through adult professionals who play band and orchestra instruments. It evolved into an adult group. In 2007, a middle school student group was added called GUMBY (Grace United Methodist Band-Youth). In the fall of 2009, GUMBY merged with our Chamber Ensemble. The group plays for the Worship Service once a month. Most of the music used is gospel rock, Dixieland style, or contemporary Christian.

### ***Communication, Groups and Opportunities***

Grace Church has entered into the 21st century with the improved and advanced communication methods. Besides our monthly Grace notes mailing, we have a website [kokomograce.org](http://kokomograce.org) and a weekly e-mail newsletter called "Experience Grace". A large video screen has been installed in Fellowship Hall with many uses including displaying pictures, announcements and other information.

We offer many opportunities for the enlightenment and advancement of our Christian values. There are adult Church School classes, a youth group with T.J. Knowland as director, the children's department with Amanda Kelly as director, United Methodist Men and United Methodist women, a group for senior adults called Added Grace, and numerous Bible Studies throughout the year.

The United Methodist Men meet monthly and have a meal and interesting programs often with guest presenters. The men have projects throughout the year in order to meet their mission obligations. These include serving the United Methodist Women's Mother-Daughter Banquet, pancake breakfasts, fish fries, and a church-wide rummage sale. They also participate in Lenten breakfasts and other programs with the other Methodist churches in the area.

The United Methodist Women has three circles that meet during the year. There is also Stella Trees Group that supports the organization financially. There are 7 or 8 general meetings or activities each year. Donna Brownfield is the president at this time. We have moneymaking activities in order to meet our mission obligations as well. These include serving soup and sandwiches at the Samaritan Caregivers Chocolate Celebration, a Mini Bazaar near Easter, an activity during the Haynes Apperson Festival, and the Fall Harvest Bazaar. UMW holds a Day of Prayer and Self Denial and the Mother/Daughter Banquet. We offer hands-on assistance when called for as with our Operation Care which prepares meals or snacks for the occasion of the death of a family member. Three or four ladies in UMW also are available for wedding receptions or anniversary celebrations. Members sort clothing at Central Middle School for the needs of children in the Kokomo schools. Help for many of these occasions is provided by women who do not attend our meetings but whose assistance is welcomed and greatly appreciated for projects and activities.

Added Grace is for senior members of the church, and is led by Galen and Hazel Hodge. Their meetings consist of a meal sometimes served in Fellowship Hall and sometimes at other places. They have interesting outside speakers or programs presented by members. They meet each month. Once in a while, they take trips to local or nearby places of interest and occasionally have gone on overnight trips.

The increase in the number of people attending our Bible Studies exhibits a persons' hunger to learn more about the Bible and especially about Jesus Christ. There are four studies starting at this time and the enrollment is well over 150 people.

### ***In Closing***

This update now closes with a quote from the 1994 book, which is still applicable and may be embraced today. "Such, then, is the story of Grace United Methodist Church, one of the great churches of Indiana. It now enters its sesquicentennial year, healthy in purpose, financially sound, inspired by a proud and dynamic membership, conscious of its mission as an instrument of Jesus Christ. With confidence in the future, it proposed, as the Caring Place, to carry the beacon of Christian love and compassion for many more generations.

In all publications, particularly histories, there are always some events and names of some individuals inadvertently omitted. Such oversights are, of course, unintentional, but their omission is understandably disappointing to those who feel they should have been included. In such an undertaking as this narrative, it is impossible to include everything and everyone that readers believe should be a part of the story. Please accept sincere regrets for whatever oversights readers may feel have occurred.

## ***OUR VISION***

GRACE – Experience it!

- G—Growth through making disciples of Jesus
- R—Reaching our community and world
- A—A family where all people can belong
- C—Christ centered worship and learning
- E—Excellence for God’s glory.

It is both a commandment and an invitation.

This is a commandment to our congregation to learn and gratefully receive the grace of God in our lives. Our lives will be lived differently when we can grasp, to the best of our understanding, the “amazing grace” of God.

This is also an invitation to others to come to our church and experience the vision and mission that is GRACE United Methodist Church

## ***OUR CORE VALUES***

- We glorify and honor God in all that we do.
- We offer ministries that inspire spiritual growth.
- We provide compassionate service through our caring ministries
- All individuals are important to Grace United Methodist Church
- All we do for Christ and His kingdom is done with quality and excellence

## ***OUR MISSION STATEMENT***

Grace United Methodist Church is a Christ-centered fellowship called to offer the best we can possibly give to God as we care for our community and world through...

- Worshiping, glorifying, and honoring God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Inviting all to grow in the knowledge of the Lord.
- Living a Spirit-filled life through our actions and words
- Offering the love of Christ to everyone.

## ***OUR THEME VERSE***

“For it is GRACE you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Jesus Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:8-10