

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE OAKTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In earlier years the Methodists in and around Oakton met in a one-room schoolhouse on Blake Lane (location of our former parsonage). A new schoolhouse was built later and the Methodists, continuing in their great work, held services there (this building having had some remodeling through the years is now occupied by the Appalachian Outfitter). The Rev. Aaron Nicholas Munday was admitted to the ministry in 1886 and was closely associated with the growth of Oakton Methodist Church until his death in 1912.

It was always the hope and dream of the Methodist families of this community to some day build a church of their own. Mr. William T. Speer helped to make this possible through his gift of land on which to build. He was the great-grandfather of four of our present members, Mrs. Elizabeth Wiley Printz, Mr. Layton Whitesell, Mr. James H. Craig, and Mr. Robert E. Craig, and great, great grandfather of two of our members, Mrs. Ellen Craig Bagby and Mr. William Henry Printz. In the year 1895-1896, Mr. Harry Blake drew the plans for the Oakton Methodist Episcopal church (which it was then known as), the old Sanctuary as it stands today. In October 1897, when the building was well on its way, a storm came up and the wind blew the walls over. Undaunted, the Oakton Methodists rebuilt the walls and completed the church.

Since each Methodist in Oakton put his trust in Him and did his part in faith, prayer and service, the Oakton M. E. Church was dedicated on Sunday, October 2, 1898. The regular pastor at that time was the Rev. C. W. Ball. About 1940, the Sunday School and Church began to grow rapidly. It was during the pastorate of the Rev. C. L. Stillwell, 1947-1953 that our first education building was built.

Apparently Oakton and Vienna became a separate charge in 1922, but they did not have a parsonage until Mr. Horton Speer (Of the Oakton Church), son of Mr. William T. Speer, gave them a building lot on Blake Lane. Shortly thereafter construction was begun and the parsonage was completed in time for the new minister Rev. Paul Schilling, who arrived in June 1932. We became a Station Charge in 1950 and acquired full title to the parsonage by paying one-half of its current value to the Vienna Methodist Church. This parsonage was loved by the membership and "home" to our Ministers and their families through the years. Being a progressive body - in 1965 we began to turn our thoughts toward a new, larger and more modern parsonage. It was at this time that two of our loyal members, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bonnet, donated 1 acre of land for this purpose. Building was soon started and completed and in June 1965. Dr. and Mrs. Elmer C. Lewis and daughter Jane moved into our new parsonage at 10480 Marbury Road, Oakton.

After many years, with ideas for a new church, a committee set out in search of a building site on which to relocate the Oakton Methodist Church. After two years and being unsuccessful in this endeavor on October 14, 1952, we authorized the purchase of 1.35 acres, back of the original plot, for \$4,500. This also extended our frontage along the highway. The land came to a point at the far corner of the property owned by Mr. M. L. Beckner, Jr. In 1955 we accepted Mr. Beckner's offer of a strip of his land for a driveway in exchange for the small triangle of our land at the back of his lot.

During 1953-1958, the pastorate of the Rev. W. L. Sturtevant, there was a rapid growth in the community as well as in the church. Thus, the need for an adequate sanctuary became acute. Two building fund drives were conducted; obtaining pledges totaling, \$118,000. A debt of \$15,000 remaining on the Educational Building was paid, and a new structure was erected adjacent to the original Church and Educational Building. On July 1, 1956, we were privileged to hold the first services in our new sanctuary, which though simple in design was worshipful and beautiful and had a seating capacity of 407. Early in 1972 air conditioning was installed in both buildings for the enjoyment and comfort of our Congregation.

Growth has continued. In Dallas, Texas, April 2-3, 1968, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church joined forces, after which we became "Oakton' United Methodist Church". This uniting brought about various changes in church organization all of which were met and put into operation" with real Christian enthusiasm here in Oakton Church.

Pastoral changes have always played an important part in the growth and development of this church, as in all United Methodist Churches. Rev. Sturdivant was succeeded in June 1958 by the Rev. Clifford Ramsey, and he by the Rev. Dr. Elmer C. Lewis in June, 1962. Dr. Lewis remained until his retirement in June 1971. It was at this time that the Bishop assigned the Rev. W. Ernest Hogge. He served six years and was followed by the Rev. Byron S. Halstead who was appointed by the Bishop in June, 1977, and sent by God to minister to the needs of the people and serve as spiritual leader in the great work being done at Oakton Church.

Located in a growing community, the Church, minister and people must stand ever ready to meet the challenges of today as well as those of the future. The construction of Interstate Highway 66 and other developments such as the Dulles Airport, townhouses, new homes, the Oakton Shopping Center and the widening of Chain Bridge Road from two small-lanes to four lanes, as well as the trend to suburban living, were all doing much to change the character of the community as well as its churches. Therefore, we needed to continually orient our thoughts and programs to the changing times.

In the summer of 1974 it was again our good fortune to have the opportunity to purchase additional land directly in back of the church property. After due consideration action was taken and approximately 5 acres of land were acquired. We had long felt the need for a larger educational building and, with the additional land, expansion was possible. A committee was appointed to look into this and formu-

late building plans for the presentation to the Church Officials for their approval. Plans to build on the existing facilities were submitted and accepted by both the Administrative Board and members of the Church. Groundbreaking for the new Educational Building took place on Sunday, September 21, 1975. The burning of the Mortgage on the Sanctuary Building and the parsonage was also accomplished on this date. Following groundbreaking, construction soon began and each day's labor brought completion closer. The building, six new classrooms, Pastor's Study, Church Office, workroom and restroom" facilities were ready for occupancy in August 1976 - another dream come true! The lovely new Educational Building was consecrated on Sunday, September 26, 1976, with the Rev. William L. Sturtevant, a former Pastor, as guest speaker. The new facilities are being much utilized and greatly enjoyed by youth and adults alike.

With the move of the Pastor's Study what was the former study has now become a bright and cheerful library and reading Room for all to use.

When Oakton Church had its origin members and friends were generous in their giving of Memorial and contributions toward memorials in Memory and in Honor of loved ones. This has continued through the years, and many lovely things have been placed in the Sanctuary and throughout the Church and Educational Buildings as lasting mementos of those in whose name the memorials have been given.

Shortly after the new Sanctuary was completed a beautiful stained glass window was given by the J. H. Craig, Sr., family and placed high above the altar in loving memory of Mr. James Henry Craig, Sr., a long-time member of Oakton Church. This memorial window has added much to the beauty of the sanctuary and we know has been a real inspiration to all who worship here.

On Sunday, September 24, 1978, Rev. Hallstead had the honor of accepting on behalf of the congregation and the church another beautiful stained glass window. This lovely window, "Christ Kneeling in Gethsemane", was presented by Mrs. Ruby Buser, representing the Memorials Committee, to be dedicated to the Glory of God and for service in the church in loving memory of a former pastor, Dr. Elmer C. Lewis, and a long-time member of the church, Mr. Rufus M. Pobst. This stained glass window, made possible by the many memorial contributions received from the families and numerous friends of Dr. Lewis and Mr. Pobst, can be beautifully viewed as it shows forth from its lofty place above the balcony over the front entrance to the church. In the summer of 1983 a protective covering of "Lexan" was installed over each of our two stained glass memorial windows.

It was in June 1980 the Bishop again saw fit to make a pastoral change at Oakton Church. At the Virginia Annual Conference Bishop W. Kenneth Goodson appointed the Rev. William H. Acosta to serve our church and its people. Rev. Acosta preached his first sermon in the Oakton Sanctuary on Sunday, June 22, 1980. There is much evidence here of Rev. Acosta's fine leadership and we are proud to have added his name to the list of clergymen who have so capably guided us in all spiritual needs as well as in

the progress which has been made in all aspects of church work as Pastor and Laymen have labored to achieve the goals set forth each year and to further the advancement of God's plan for Oakton United Methodist Church.

In January, 1980 one of our members made it possible for us to begin the Tape Ministry. Mr. Alfred Cordes loaned his equipment to the church for this purpose and gave of his time to record the worship service each Sunday morning as well as some special programs. These tapes, with appropriate equipment for listening are made available for use by church members. This service has continued through the years and today tapes are being delivered weekly to the shut-ins at home, in hospitals and nursing homes.

In September 1981 the Sanctuary was redecorated and new carpeting was purchased - the rich red, which was chosen, adds warmth and beauty to an already lovely place of worship. Soon after the carpeting was laid, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cole saw the need for new kneeling pads at the Altar. Material was purchased (*remainder of sentence missing in the original*).

Music has always been an important part of worship here. Many of you will remember the old treadle organ so laboriously played for so many years by Mr. Clement Royer, Sr., and Mrs. Isabelle McDonald in the little white church. With the new church (1956) came a lovely Hammond Organ which was played by a number of fine organists and enjoyed by all for the past twenty-eight years. Age brought on problem and in 1982 we purchased a new Allen Computer Organ from the Allen Organ Company, Allentown, Pennsylvania. At the same time, two pianos were purchased, one for the sanctuary and one for general use within the building and more especially in the Choir Room. These lovely musical instruments were delivered October 28, 1982. Through contributions given in memory of and/or in Honor of loved ones and friends as well as the many other pledges made in order to completely subsidize the full expense of the organ itself and any additional costs, the organ was fully paid for and dedicated at a special service on Sunday evening September 18, 1983. Mrs. Shirley Young, Chairman of the Memorial's Committee, read the list of In Memoriams and Honorariums and made the presentation of the organ. Col. Jesse Morrow, Chairman of Trustees, accepted the organ on behalf of the membership.

It is through this lovely new organ and the talent of Mrs. Janice Murley, our organist, that worshippers in Oakton Church are privileged to hear organ music at its best. We are also blest with a fine Choir - wherein there is much musical talent which is being brought out so beautifully by our Choir Director, Mrs. Jane Brewer. A choir cannot be at its best without accompaniment - Mrs. Murley at the Organ and oft times joined by Mrs. Trudy Rupp or Mrs. Sue Wells at the piano.

In the summer of 1980 after many meetings and prayerful consideration, the Board of Trustees made the decision to sell just a little under five acres of land immediately in back of the Church. This land was sold to Doby's construction Company who in turn sold to Poretzky and Starr from whom Oak-

ton United Methodist Church netted the sum of nearly \$250,000.

Following the sale of the above-mentioned property, in an effort to comply with Methodist belief and Biblical teachings pertaining to tithing – which is giving a tenth (10%) of one's monetary receipts to the Glory of God - it was voted to give \$25,000 for use as a Scholarship Fund for Ministerial Students in the Virginia Conference. Mrs. Lavina Stewart and Mr. William P. Robertson, Members of the Annual Conference presented the check, on our behalf., to Bishop Robert M. Blackburn at the Annual Conference in June 1983. It was a joy and a real feeling of satisfaction to know that a portion of that which we received could go to such a worthwhile cause.

The sale of the property also enabled us to establish an annual Scholarship Fund in amounts ranging from \$250 to \$1,000. To be eligible for this Scholarship one must be a member of a United Methodist Church in the Dunn Loring, Oakton, and Vienna area. This Fund is in addition to our Educational Loan Fund, which was established in 1973 to assist students in the Oakton Church Family and Community who might otherwise not be able to attend a college or related institution. These loans are to be repaid whereas the new Scholarship Fund is a gift.

With Spring and Summer 1984 came a new roof and many members gave of their time and energy toward painting the large social hall. The United Methodist Women' purchased material and one of the member's, Mrs. Carolyn Timberlake, made drapes for the large Social Hall. Mr. Stewart Lawler covered the cornices which finished off the windows. The Widow's Mite group purchased new dishes for the small kitchen. Sometime prior to all this, the United Methodist Women put new drapes in the small Social Hall and our active youth painted the Kindergarten/Nursery and did their part in spicing up the Sunday School Rooms. Mrs. Betty Glass made drapes for the windows in the little church.

Another beautiful addition to the church, given anonymously by an Oakton Church couple, is a lovely silver service to be used for receptions, teas and wherever else within the church that the silver service would enhance the table and add to the occasion.

Another long-awaited and much needed improvement was realized in the summer of 1984 - the parking lot was hard surfaced and at the same time expanded to the rear of the property, affording us approximately eighty-eight available spaces - four of which are allocated for the handicapped. Landscaping and additional lighting for the parking lot will soon be accomplished.

After a period of inactivity; the United Methodist Men was reorganized. The new group, consisting of some of the former group and some newly interested men of the Church and the Community, served the Mother-Daughter Banquet this year and are now meeting the 3rd Sunday of each month for breakfast, business meeting and an interesting program. Attendance has been good and real interest has been shown. Advance planning through the spring of 1985 continues.

In. the Church, as in all of life, passing years continue to bring about changes. Long-time members move away, some are called from our midst to that Home above and many new families, who move into the Oakton' area, unite with us - thus from time-to-time the membership both decreases and increases. At the beginning of 1984 the Oakton United Methodist Church Family numbered 691. The "family" we count. on, but visitors are expected and welcome.

Yes, a proud past and a promising future. May we continue to go forward in faith with the Lord's Blessings ever upon us.