

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The church in South Vineland has an interesting history dating back to post Civil War days. One of the early settlers of the South Vineland area was a devoted Christian woman named Mrs. Anna Barrows. She saw the need of a Sunday School to train the young people in their religious habits. A group was formed and met in her home regularly, beginning in November 1868. Mrs. Barrows "so let her light shine before me, that others saw her good works" and wished to help. Her dedicated life so affected Mrs. Lowber, one of her friends from Philadelphia, that she gave \$1000 to build a chapel.

South Vineland at this time consisted of a railroad station, a Baptist Church, a post office, two stores, a blacksmith shop, a school house and a few scattered homes. The citizens were mostly New Englanders, with a large percentage coming from Connecticut. Sherman Avenue was called the "Landis Avenue" of South Vineland. Into this village, on land donated by Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Garrison of Millville, and situated in a grove of trees on the southwest corner of Grant Avenue and the Boulevard, a chapel was built. The deed was recorded on October 1, 1869. The chapel, seating 150 persons, was dedicated in June 1870 as Lowber Chapel by Bishop Simpson of the New Jersey Conference. The first trustees were: Ashbelle Landon, William King, William Colesbury, Aaron Dogwood and Mark Hanson. The chapel was supplied by the Rev. F. S. Chubbuck. Later, the Rev. Corson was appointed minister of the congregation. Membership grew slowly and times were hard. Expenses could not be paid and soon the church was without a pastor. For four years Lowber Chapel had the services of local preachers.

A fire on July 21, 1874 destroyed the chapel. An investigation showed it was the work of an arsonist. Probably because it was in someone's home, the pewter set consisting of a baptismal bowl, bread tray and tankard, was saved. It is clearly marked on all pieces "Lowber's Chapel" or "L.C.", in honor of Mrs. Lowber. This is all that remains from the first chapel. The building was insured for \$1000.00. The Sunday after the fire, services were held in the open air while arrangements were being made to use the school house.

A committee was formed to look for a site on which to rebuild. In late August, 1874, it was voted to purchase a lot on Sherman Avenue, east of the Boulevard, from Mr. & Mrs. William H. Gardner for the sum of \$137.50, "and to pay for it and take deed of it for the Society, according to the rules and usage of the Methodist Episcopal Church Conference Instruction." The deed was recorded October 17, 1874. A frame building 40 ft. by 24 ft. was soon constructed to seat 200 persons, at a cost of \$2000. The first service was held on February 14, 1875. The trustees at that time were E. B. Bennett, William Roberts, William Kennedy, Readbury Troughs and Owen Bartlett.

In April of that year the name was changed to the South Vineland Methodist Episcopal Church. Upon the advice of the presiding elder, John Heisler, the Rev. J. E. Estlin was made pastor at a salary of \$350 and whatever his board cost in excess of \$3.50 weekly. Mr. Estlin was succeeded in 1877 by the Rev. H. A. Clifford, in 1878 by the Rev. W. H. Burley, in 1879 by the Rev. G. F. Goe, and in 1880 by the Rev. M. C. Brettian.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Finances were again poor and after being without a steady pastor for nearly a year, it was decided to attach to the Methodist Church in Vineland, whose pastor would preach one Sunday each month while local preachers would supply the other three Sundays. Membership in 1881 was 30 members. The population of South Vineland was about 150 persons.

Early in 1885, Clarence Gardner was made chairman of a committee to raise money for a bell. Contributions ranged for \$.10 to \$2.00. Finally \$26.25 was collected. The bell cost \$25.00, freight \$.66, nails \$.12 and rope \$.21. In his report, Mr. Gardner wished that "the ringing of this bell may speak to the thoughtless souls of their religious duties and turn many feet to the door, to result in the up-building of the church."

In 1887 the Church was again in a position to support a pastor and the Rev. A. C. Dutton was appointed to serve one year. Mr. Dutton was followed by Rev. Isaiah Sheldon, the Rev. A. Lester Hazlett and the Rev. N. Aspinwall, all in 1889. Mr. Aspinwall served until 1894, when the Rev. Joseph Barraclough was appointed and served until 1905.

The earliest Sunday School records available are from 1889, when Joseph Brewster was Superintendent. Mrs. Hall served as assistant, Maria Brewster as secretary, Thomas H. Mole as treasurer, and Della Birch as librarian. The group consisted of five officers, six teachers and fifty scholars. The average attendance was 35. The average collection was \$.40. The Sunday School met in the afternoon and continued to grow until in 1901 there were 84 scholars, with an average attendance of fifty.

Mr. Barraclough's term of service saw many changes. The community, however, grew slowly, with only a few farms springing up. Many of the roads became impassible after heavy rains or snowstorms and spring thaws. This interfered with attendance and finances. The Mite Society, whose financial help kept the Church going, became known as the Ladies Aid. In 1903, Mr. Barraclough celebrated the 40th year of his call by the Church to preach the Gospel.

As the poultry business developed, more people were coming to the area. In 1905 the Rev. J. S. Eldridge, Jr. became the minister and served two years, followed by the Rev. Chris Ernst, who served until 1910. Finances continued to be a problem. The Ladies Aid served oyster and chicken suppers and held quilting parties to help with the expenses of the church. The Rev. C. W. Berry began his pastorate in 1910 but was plagued with ill health and served less than one year. He was followed by Rev. C. W. Balles who served one year and the Rev. Banaze T. Lord who served until 1920.

Church membership began to grow at a faster rate. In March 1918 the Ladies Aid met after a long lapse and elected Mrs. William Jardine, president; Mrs. George, vice-president; Mrs. J. A. Vanaman, secretary; and Mrs. John Kimble, treasurer. When it became increasingly apparent that more room was needed for the Sunday School, a building was rented on the southeast corner of Sherman Avenue and the Boulevard. An apartment was also available on the same location and became the living quarters for the minister.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The horse and carriage shed at the rear of the church was converted into the Primary Department of the Sunday School and named Bide-a-While Hall in 1922. Other organizations of the church also used the building for meetings.

Meanwhile the church took a gigantic step forward and acquired the parsonage and ground on the corner of Sherman Avenue and Main Road at a cost of \$4500. A survey had been made and it was found that this area was rapidly developing, and would probably be an ideal spot for a future church. The Rev. Fred Slater was the pastor. In his report in 1922, Mr. Slater stated that the year had been one of the most active in the history of the church. The roof had been resingled, interior painted and a new carpet laid at a total cost of \$567. William Trevarthen became director of the choir consisting of sixteen persons. For the first time membership was over 100 people. Attendance for Easter Sunday 1922 was 130 persons. A telephone was installed in the parsonage in order to make the pastor more accessible to the people.

The greeting to the congregation by the new pastor, the Rev. W. H. Libe in 1924 was "not to become rusty, musty, or crusty." Mr. Libe served until 1927. He was succeeded by the Rev. E. G. Estelow, the Rev. A. I. Ross and the Rev. Walter Nickless. The church continued to grow and officials began thinking of a future larger church.

The Church's 70th Anniversary was celebrated during the pastorate of Rev. Carlton N. Nelson, who was appointed to the church in 1937. Membership was increasing and space was becoming a problem. Bide-a-While Hall was

overcrowded and all adult classes of the Sunday School met in the sanctuary of the church. Long range plans were discussed and it was decided the place to build would be the area next to the parsonage.

In 1939 after the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church, the church became known as the South Vineland Methodist Church.

The Ladies Aid also became known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service. The first officers were: Mrs. Roy Pancoast, president; Mrs. A. M. Becker, vice-president; Mrs. Walter McCann, recording secretary; Mrs. Herbert McMicking, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Gus Walters, treasurer.

In 1941 the Rev. Gordon McNaughton began his three year term as minister. He was followed by Rev. Kenneth L. Lord who served for one year and then by the Rev. William B. Starr who also served three years. Membership grew steadily and space became an acute problem.

In 1948, during the pastorate of the Rev. Charles DuBois, a building committee was formed and a drive for funds was made. The committee consisted of: Loren Riggins Sr., Gus Walters, John Finch, Mrs. Ernest Fiedler, Clifton Sanders Sr., Einar Anderson, Harold A. Vanaman and Harry Sichlau. With the combined efforts of the members and friends of the church and the help of God, sufficient pledges were obtained and work began on the new church. The present church was built at Main Road and Sherman Avenue. The cornerstone

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

was laid on June 19, 1949. The consecration service was held on April 2, 1950.

The Fishermen and Adult Fellowship Clubs were organized during the ministry of the Rev. Harrison Thompson. Mr. Thompson was appointed in 1950 and membership grew quickly under his leadership.

Dr. J. Hillman Coffee was appointed to South Vineland in 1953. He served the church four years. The Methodist Youth Fellowship raised funds for a new organ which served the church for many years. In May 1956, a dedication service was held for the church building, together with a mortgage burning ceremony.

A lighted Bulletin board was installed and dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Roy Pancoast and her family in 1957. The budget for 1957 was \$12,900 with membership increasing to 370 people. The Rev. Horace Frantz followed Dr. Coffee and served one year.

The church was faced with the problem of space for the Sunday School, which had outgrown the facilities, when the Rev. David Probert became pastor in 1958. Plans were made to build an educational building on the west side of the church. A loyalty crusade, sufficient funds were pledged to begin the building. Loren Riggins Jr. served as chairman of the building committee. By 1965 the \$65,000 building was entirely free of debt and the dedication service was held. The trustees at this time were: Robert Lee, Howard Ahlquist, Howard Marsh, Albert Chynoweth, Loren Riggins Sr., Harold Vanaman, Mrs. Howard Ahlquist, Jack Baer and Loren Riggins Jr..

Through the bequest of \$1000 from Miss Lillian Chambers, whose father was an early member of the church, an addition of land was acquired on the north side of the property.

The Rev. Samuel Way became minister in 1961 and served three years. During his pastorate a Methodist Men's Club was organized. The first elected officers included: Howard Ahlquist, president; Albert Chynoweth, vice-president; Robert Lee, secretary, and Edwin Buckminster, treasurer.

In 1964 the Rev. Joseph A. Hofer Jr. was appointed minister. The church was repainted inside and out, new screens and storm windows installed, and the floors refinished. In addition, the church kitchen and the parsonage bathroom were remodeled. A study for the pastor was made in the room below the choir loft, sponsored by the Adult Fellowship. In his report to the Quarterly Conference in 1968, Mr. Hofer reported a church membership of 331 and an average attendance of 158. In 1968 the official name of the church was changed to the South Vineland United Methodist Church. This was changed following the merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

In November 1968 the 100th Anniversary celebration was held. As members, friends and former pastors came together for the happy occasion; eleven 50 year members were honored. They included: Mrs. Charlotte McCann, Harold Vanaman, Mr. & Mrs. Clifton Sanders Sr., Mrs. Raymond Charlson, Mrs. Loren S. Riggins Sr., Mrs. Edith Ranagan, Mrs. Helen Simpson, Mrs. Elmira Chynoweth, Mrs. Rose Walters and Mrs. Thomas May.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In 1970 Rev. Hofer and family said farewell and Rev. W. Howard Marshall and family arrived to continue the ministry. The first major project was a complete renovation of the parsonage. 1972 brought a Lay Witness Mission which stimulated the life of the church. As a result several sharing groups were formed. 1972 also saw the W.S.C.S. change its name to the United Methodist Women.

Marion Edge retired as organist and choir director in 1972. The church hall was filled with members and friends at a testimonial dinner given in her honor. Mrs. Patricia Cummines took over the duties as organist in a very capable way for 24 years. Prior to that she had filled in on several occasions.

Later in 1972 Mrs. Andrea Bullock became choir director.

In February 1973 the Cup of Love project began. It has continued to grow and reaches out to help those in need. Each year funds are raised for this purpose. The Fellowship Hall was completely renovated and a new heating system was installed. A display cabinet for historical material was given in memory of James Molyneaux by his family.

1974 saw Carillon Bells given in memory of Carl F. Zoch, a new lounge redecorated and named "W. Howard Marshall Lounge" and an Endowment Fund was established.

1975 was also a busy year. A new organ was installed and dedicated to the glory of God as a gift from the Riggins family. Plans were made for a bus ministry.

Cliff Sanders Jr. planted and cared for flowers by the Bulletin Board with tender loving care for over 25 years until his health declined.

The Bi-Centennial year of 1976 brought many changes and projects. When the church was built, it was hoped to include a steeple. Funds were short, however, and it was left out for a future project. Many persons expressed the desire to establish a steeple fund and the Bi-Centennial year seemed an ideal time to launch the project. Permission was granted with a provision that no debt would be incurred. A committee was formed and work began. Gifts began to pour in without solicitation.

There was much work to be done in the tower before installation. On July 5th the steeple arrived from Texas and on July 29th was raised. The old bell from the former church was installed and can be rung for any occasion.

A Bi-Centennial celebration and steeple dedication was held on October 17, 1976. The entire project was completely paid for by contributions in memory and in honor of loved ones and to the Glory of God. Many loving helping hands gave of their time and efforts and it was a time of elation and satisfaction to all.

August 1976 saw a new roof on the church, a new carpet given by the Riggins family, and new vestments given by the Finch and Anderson families in memory of John B. Finch and Einar Anderson. New choir robes were ordered and funds were again sent to Zaire, Africa and Red Bird Mission, Kentucky.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Howard Marshall left in 1979 after serving faithfully for nine years. He was followed by Rev. W. Benjamin Eppinger. Soon after Mr. Eppinger's arrival a house and land west of the church property was acquired. The house was completely remodeled and the land was cleared to use for a recreational area and extra parking.

The church was alive and growing and before long it became evident that more room was needed, including the sanctuary. A building committee was formed consisting of G. Lapaire, chairman, T. Austin, B. Anderson, E. Baer, L. S. Riggins Jr., and Rev. Eppinger. Work was soon under way and in a few months we had an enlarged sanctuary and choir area, practice room, new pews, pastor's and secretary's offices, new kitchen and rest room facilities.

The music program grew under the leadership of Patricia and Richard Cummines with a senior, chapel, cherub and bell choir. Richard Cummines became Music Director in 1981.

In 1984 Joan S. Riggins, who established and led the Cherub Choir for 25 years, passed away. Her leadership was taken over by our beloved Patricia Cummines, assisted by Sandy Hopper. A memorial scholarship was established in memory of Joan for her untiring efforts in developing musical abilities through the Cherub Choir. In 1991 Blanche Jardine Riggins passed away and the scholarship was combined in her memory. Blanche was a life time member, committed to the musical program, and shared her talents throughout her life.

In 1987, Betty Riggins DeVico and Loren S. Riggins Jr. presented a grand piano for the sanctuary in honor of their parents, Blanche and Loren S. Riggins Sr.

Dr. James E. Doran arrived in 1988. Several Growth and Renewal weekends were held with great success.

A sound booth was installed in the rear of the sanctuary. Tapes were prepared weekly and taken to the sick and shut-ins.

There came a special day on April 21, 1991 when the extension project was completely paid.

In 1992, a Rogers Classic organ was given in honor of Patricia and Richard Cummines for their dedicated efforts in the musical program of our church.

Through a bequest from the estate of Eli and Emilie Raimbault, a stained glass window fund was established. In a very short time pledges were received; not only for the five large windows in the main sanctuary, but for the four smaller ones located in the back as well. By early September of 1993, the windows were installed. A dedication service was held on October 17, 1993.

In 1993 the membership was 315 and the budget was \$130,844. The combined value of land, sanctuary, educational building, parsonage and other assets amounted to \$1,571,089 with no indebtedness.

Larry Tipton became the Music Director in September, 1993. In November of

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1993 a 125th Anniversary Program was held. Former ministers and their wives were welcomed back and fourteen 50 plus year members were honored. An updated history of the Church was written.

In 1994 Rev. Doran was invited to become a member of the Steering Committee on the Walk to Emmaus in the N.E. Jurisdiction. There are only three members in the N.E. Jurisdiction and thirty world wide. Permission was granted to Rev. Doran to participate.

A Sunday School Choir was created with Katie Coltri, Barbara Cline and Mildred Darmstadter as directors. The S.S. Choir sang once a month in the Sunday morning service.

A Contemporary Sunday evening Worship Service began on October 2nd. Joel Mastrangelo played the piano along with guitars. Robert and Elaine Giercyk were approved to continue as Certified Lay Speakers at a Special Charge Conference. Mr. Giercyk was also approved as a Candidate for the Ministry.

The Parking Lot was repaired and also roof repairs. Both the Strawberry Festival and Oyster Dinners were a success. Extensive upgrades and repairs were completed at the parsonage. Warren Garretson organized a Fishing Derby which was continued for several years.

The Promise Keepers were organized in 1995 and met weekly on Saturday Mornings.

On August 12, 1995 a fire occurred in the basement and damage was done in the Sanctuary. Pat Doran was the "heroine" of the day. Had it not been for her quick action after smelling smoke and calling the Fire Department, drastic damage would have occurred. Fortunately none of the musical instruments were damaged. We were able to worship in the sanctuary while repairs were completed in the social hall. We then worshipped in the social hall until repairs were completed in the sanctuary. New carpeting and seat cushions were installed and the floor was repaired and varnished. A re-dedication of the sanctuary occurred in 1996.

A "Life in the Spirit" week-end was held in 1996 and the Promise Keepers attended events in Washington D.C. and New York City. Ann Ferguson became the Church organist in 1996. A retreat was held at Lancaster, Pa. with Pastor Jim as the worship leader.

Pastor Doran's 3 year appointment in the International Steering Committee for the Walk to Emmaus was completed in 1997.

The Hand Bell Choir consisted of eleven members and performed monthly in the Sunday Morning Worship Services. One hundred and twenty shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child were sent out and this project continues each year.

In 1998 a Hymnal Drive was held and white hymnals were purchased. Membership in 1998 was 222 and the budget was \$141,037.00.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Pastor's Prayer Group began in 1999 and met in our church on Thursday mornings. An Adult Retreat was held in Avalon, N.J. Several men of the Church attended the "Resurrection Breakfast" held in Vineland.

A Praise Band was organized in 2000 and played during the Sunday morning Worship Services. The Prayer Room was dedicated in January of 2000. The fire alarm system was upgraded and new windows were installed in the rental property.

The Memorial Garden given in memory of Harold Vanaman was completed with shrubbery and flowers planted, together with a fountain. Kathy Thomas was approved as the Youth Pastor in October of 2000.

In September 2001 a ministry began at the Baker House Residential Assisted Living and continues today. Weekly programs are held on Wednesday mornings.

The rest room near the sanctuary was remodeled and made handicapped accessible. The exterior of the church was painted. A hospitality committee was formed and has done an excellent job through the years. They have helped with various dinners and luncheons - such as funeral luncheons, new member luncheons, missions, etc.

Kathryn Town was hired as the Music Director in October of 2001. The Women's Ministry held a soup luncheon which has continued yearly. Pastor Doran traveled to the Holy Lands in November of 2001.

In 2002 windows in the educational building were replaced. The Pastor's Prayer Group met weekly with 10 to 15 pastors from Cumberland County. Two services began with a Traditional service at 9:00 a.m. and a Contemporary Service at 11:00 a.m.

Kathy Thomas resigned as Youth Director. Ann Ferguson resigned as organist in January 2003. Elaine McLaughlin agreed to play for the early service. The Scholarship Fund was transferred to the First United Methodist Church in Vineland. Ken Corson of Vineland was hired as the Youth Director and Peggy Canale as the assistant.

Pastor Doran retired from the Ministry in June of 2003 after fifteen years of faithful service at our church. Jim stated that it was a joy to serve and thanked everyone for their support. This was the longest tenure for a pastor in the history of our church. A farewell party was held to honor the Dorans at Wheaton Village with a large attendance. On June 7th, the Dorans hosted a barbecue in the Fellowship Hall honoring the Administrative Board and the Worship Team.

Elizabeth Mazzochi was hired as the Church Secretary. Elaine McLaughlin, Mildred Darmstadter and Eleanor Baer played for the early worship service.

Rev. Donald Knott was appointed to our Church as of July 1st 2003. Rev. Knott thanked Ron Reese for all the work done at the parsonage. A welcoming dinner was held for the Knott family.

A new copier was purchased. The budget for 2003 was \$159,409.00 and the membership was 200.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In 2004 many improvements were made. An upgraded fire system was installed in the Fellowship Hall. The infant nursery was remodeled with painted murals, new cribs, etc.

A new sound system was installed in the sanctuary and lights were installed in the parking lot. A Boy Scout Service was held. Forty-one Methodist Hymnals were purchased by members for the early worship service. Mary Alice Davis helped out with the organ when Elaine McLaughlin could not attend.

Ken Tubertini, Administrative Board Chairman, and his family moved to New York State. Ken had been the Board Chairman sine 1991. Jesse Cline, who had been the Assistant Chairman, took over as Chairman. Ruth McGoldrick became the Church Secretary in May, following the resignation of Elizabeth Mazzochi.

A softball team was organized to play in the Millville Softball League, under the direction of Rob Town and continues today.

A new phone system was installed in the Pastor's office and in the parsonage.

Ken Corson resigned as Youth Director in May of 2005. Chris and Patti Curcio are developing a Junior Youth Group. Also in 2005 our church rented our facilities to the Pan American 7th Day Adventist Church.

Ceiling fans were purchased for the Sanctuary. Plans were made to hold an Alpha Course in 2006.

The Pan American Church left our facilities in 2006 after purchasing their own building. The Administrative Board began meeting in Room 22. The

Wednesday Fellowship Group also decided to meet there.

A Planning Session was held in May. Several suggestions were considered for the coming months. New movie screens were purchased for the sanctuary. The two church services were consolidated in October. Sunday school was held at 9:00 a.m. and the church service at 10:30 a.m.

In 2007 the Vineland Regional Adventist School rented the third floor of our educational building for the school year. Forty children from Pre-K through 8th grade attended. They are now in the second year with their school.

A Stitchers Group was begun by France Gilmour. Prayer shawls, booties, sweaters and hats were created. Ron Reese and Carol Parks began giving Communion to our shut-ins each month. Other members have helped with the project.

The Junior Youth Group with Patti and Chris Curcio has been growing. Kathryn Town and the Praise Band started Sunday Evening Praise Services once a month. Mike Denelsbeck and Rob Town planned a Bible Study at the dance studio next door.

Don and Dee Yeager reorganized greeters for the worship services. A special worship service in May of 2007 honored the Police Officers in Vineland. Each officer was given a copy of the book "Beyond the Badge."

The Hospitality Committee under the leadership of Don and Dee Yeager organized a spaghetti dinner in March to benefit Ranch Hope.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTH VINELAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Two Alpha Courses were held in 2007.
A Vision Team was organized in 2008
and will be meeting through March of
2009.

The Welcome Center was enlarged and
the Prayer Room was moved to the room
across from the Choir Room. Repairs
were needed on the organ. A special
fund drive was held and the repairs were
completed.

A second Spaghetti Dinner was held for
Ranch Hope and \$1881.00 was realized.
A new air conditioner was installed in
the Sanctuary and new window air
conditioners at the parsonage. A second
"Police Officers Appreciation" Service
was held in May for the Millville Police
Force and they were also given copies of
the "Beyond the Badge" books.

Now the South Vineland United
Methodist Church has completed 140
years. Many changes have come about
and many hurdles have been overcome.
Without the dedication of many faithful
members, the church could not have
survived. We are a loving and caring
congregation and have been fortunate in
having dedicated ministers through the
years. We are blessed.

Written by Edna M. Molyneaux in 1993
and updated to 2008 by Doreen M. Dyer,
Church Historian.

