

So Many Memories

St. John's United Methodist Church



1950 | 2000

Celebrating 50 Years of Faith

Committed to a Future in Christ

Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration
1950 - 2000
St. John's United Methodist Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico

*God has blessed St. John's through fifty years of ministry.
To God be all glory and praise.*

*We pray His blessing on our future as we follow His call be a
faithful people.*

*Together we are growing in what it means to be fully devoted
followers of Jesus and how to share that understanding with those
who are far from God.*

*Rev. Jim Hawk
Senior Pastor
2000*

Gathered to Grow - Sent Out to Sow

SO MANY MEMORIES
ST. JOHN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
1950 - 2000

There are so many memories - so little space. Reflections, perceptions, memories, and impressions that tell the story of God's faithfulness at this one location. Voices from the past whisper remember me, remember me, I am a part of who you are.

St. John's came into existence in 1950 the year the Korean War began. It was post WWII when church was an important part of family life in the United States.

It was decided by the Methodist church that a new church be established in Albuquerque. Bishop Angie Smith, Bishop of the Oklahoma-New Mexico Conference, thought that the new church should be on the west side of the Rio Grande. At Annual Conference in 1950 Rev. J. J. Stewart was appointed to recruit and organize this new church. After a survey of the homes and business in that area it was determined that there was a greater need for a church in the rapidly growing northeast heights. The name of the new church was to be St. John's Methodist Church. The site was selected by the Albuquerque Board of Missions half way between the Hoffmantown and Bel-Air developments on an open, barren area referred to as a mesa.

On October 17, 1950 Ground Breaking Ceremonies were held by Bishop Angie Smith and F. Lee Willshire, Albuquerque District Superintendent. Dr. M. Buren Stewart, a young pastor then, some years later to be appointed to St. John's, attended this ceremony and reports: "When we finally reached the location it was in the middle of nowhere. There was sand, scrub oak, rabbit bush and more sand. A small clearing had been made for the ceremony. Prior to beginning the ritual Bishop Smith said, 'The man who located this church here is either a fool or a genius and only time will tell which'." The reason for the establishment of St. John's as stated by the District Superintendent at the groundbreaking was: "to provide a proper and adequate house of worship for this section of the city."

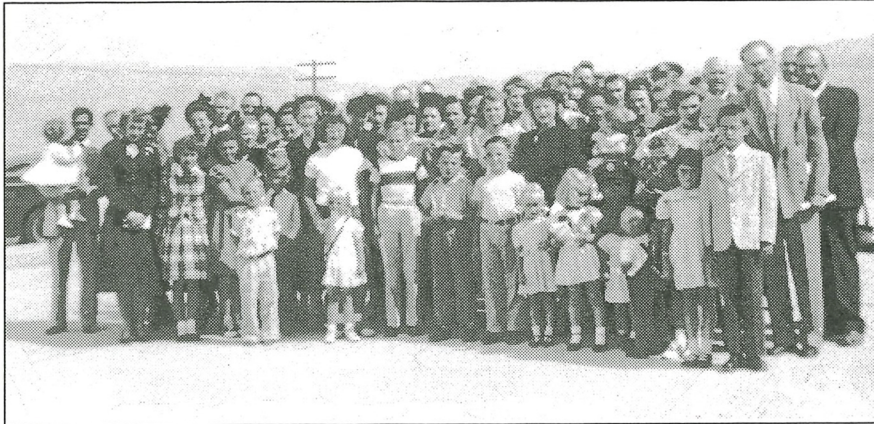
Ralph Dixon, early member, describes another tale about the groundbreaking: "My impression is that Angie Smith was invited to participate shovel and all. Present were Rev. James Stewart (appointed first pastor by Bishop Smith), Cliff Trent, Mr. J. R. Cole and Mr. Chester French among others. The latter two were significant in contributing and raising money for the church. My impression further was that Rev. Stewart had moved somewhat independently in a number of ways. It was not to be the last time that he and the Bishop were to disagree. When Bishop Smith exited his car, he looked around, was taken somewhat aback and asked, 'why in the name of heaven are we building a church out here?' It was true that there were no houses, structures of any size within a half mile radius. Rev. Stewart was certain that 'his' church would someday be a leader in the conference."

Reports all seem to agree that Bishop Smith seemed appalled at the location selected. Time proved the selection of the site to be well chosen and Bishop Smith was known later to have smilingly mentioned his own remarks.

The area had been platted for development by the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Butscher. Grace Butscher donated the first lot and Mr. J. R. Cole gave another. Mr. C. T. French was another important contributor. With help from the Albuquerque District Mission Board, four other lots were purchased. The address was 2633 California Street just north of Menaul. St. John's became the first building in the Vista Encantada Addition.

The congregation of St. John's was actually organized Sunday, October 15, 1950, in the Lippett building at Manual Road and North Alvarado with Rev. James J. Stewart, the first appointed pastor, and F. Lee Wilshire, District Superintendent, presiding. Thirteen were baptized and forty-seven joined the church. The congregation continued to meet in the Lippett building until the first building was completed.

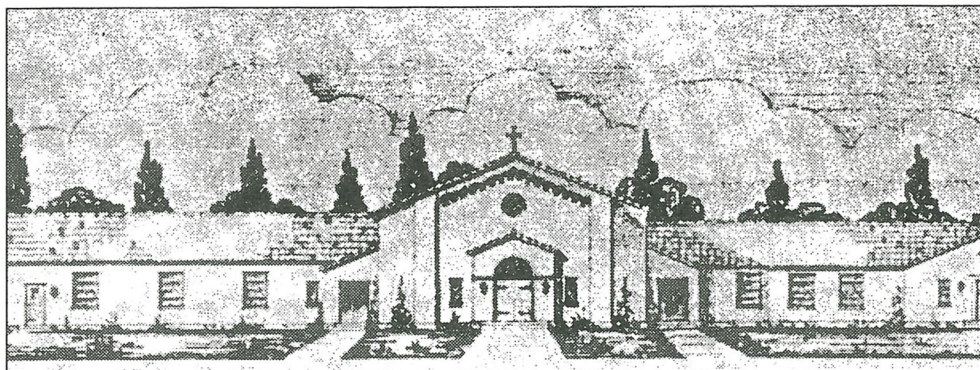
Frank M. Hartman was the architect who designed St. John's. The first unit was constructed by J. L. Hughes, contractor, who graciously accepted volunteer labor for everything which volunteers were able to do. Much of the materials were donated. Due to the generosity and love and cooperation of many people including the contractors, the building was almost completed by the Christmas holidays of 1950 at



"ORGANIZING GROUP" OCTOBER 15, 1950

a cost of \$16,000 including lots, building, and furnishings. This first unit served as chapel or sanctuary and continues to be in use today (2000) known as Cole Hall. The eventual structures that evolved do not resemble the first architectural concept.

The first meeting of the Board of Stewards of St. John's was held on the morning of October 28, 1950 in a hastily thrown together tool house on the site with boards over saw horses for seats.



THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT

The first meeting of the Board of Stewards of St. John's was held on the morning of October 28, 1950 in a hastily thrown together tool house on the site with boards over saw horses for seats.

On November 17, 1950 the women of the church were invited to an organizational meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Stewart. Mrs. Russell Scott was hostess and chairperson pro-tem until Mrs. Dan Streitch, District Secretary of promotion, organized the twenty-two women who were all strangers to one another. Officers were elected. Right away the women volunteered to furnish sandwiches, coffee, and cookies on Saturdays for the volunteer workman at the church site.

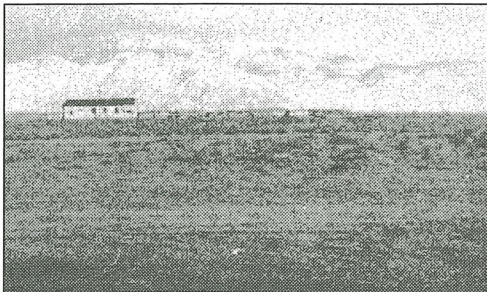
On Saturday evening, December 23, 1950, a church carol sing led by Ralph Dixon was enjoyed at the new building. A borrowed generator from Sandia Base furnished the electricity. Mr. Dixon recalls this gathering: "Our first attendance was a night - carol

sing - just before Christmas. My memory is that this was the first meeting in St. John's, a Sunday service followed. I played the piano. It was a small group of 'pioneers'. That first meeting, the carol sing, was remarkable. It was chilly. The metal chairs were ice cold. We sang with borrowed hymnals as I remember. The singing was spirited and were that group to reassemble today, they would be amazed and very proud to see St. John's today and to have played a part in its foundation. They were a loving group."

On Sunday, December 24, 1950, the first worship service was held in the church with Rev. F. Lee Wilshire reading scripture and giving the pastoral prayer. Mr. Cole and Mr. French, known as the guardian laymen of St. John's, gave short messages and Rev. Stewart preached a meaningful sermon, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God". There were one hundred-five in attendance. There was one baptism and six others joined that evening. Kay Hartman was at the organ for this service and her father, Frank M. Hartman, who was the architect for the building, was the director of music.

Church School was scheduled for December 31, 1950 and choir practice was to begin as soon as heat and electricity were installed. The Stewarts purchased their own home and used it rent free to the church as the parsonage for as long as he was the pastor.

Mr. Dixon recalls: "The church consisted of the small foyer, the kitchen, a small office, and a storage area off the one 'large' room. Wires were hung so that drapes divided the room for Sunday School classes. There was a small raised area for the altar and choir - a class was held there too. The choir was hardly more than an octet. The accompaniment was the piano but there was great enthusiasm of the early congregation. Members doubled as teachers, trustees, choir directors, etc."



LONELY INDEED

Mr. Dixon writes: "I sponsored the MYF. We had 4-7 girls who were steady attendees, but we had no boys. We labored many months trying to entice a few. In those early days, every activity was preceded by necessity to sweep the room. The canyon winds were fierce and the sand blew

in, fanning out 2-3 inches deep. I remember one MYF session where we swung wet towels around to clear the air of a bit of (the) dust."

An early member who attended St. John's in 1950 and then joined in 1951, Margaret Austin (Plemons) writes about moving many times over the years but has "always kept a soft spot in our hearts for St. John's". She and her husband were business partners with Carl and Esther Tackett, charter members, who were very active during their membership. Rose Cazier has held her membership since early 1951 and remembers attending that first Christmas Eve candlelight service with her family. Loeda Richards is another member since 1951. She and her husband were very active in the early life of the church and she continues to attend. Nancy Gilfillan Riley remembers fondly of "being raised" at St. John's in the early years. Her mother, Mary Gilfillan, who joined in 1951 has remained a loyal member. They joined St. John's to find a Sunday School program for their daughter. Mary would like to have been in choir, but as a nurse she missed too many Sunday mornings for that to be. Nancy remembers having Sunday School class in the choir loft in the original building which set all alone on the mesa. She wrote, "I earned a Revised Standard Version of the Bible by not missing any Sundays for one year."

A letter from Troyetta Batley, charter member, reflects the loving, family spirit of the founding group which laid the foundation for who we are as a church today.

Mrs. Robert L. Batley
3007 Sunset Avenue
Farmington, N.M. 87401
February 10, 2000

St. Johns UMC

Congratulations on the 50th anniversary of your church. My husband, Robert L. Batley and I were charter members.

Bob was a Sgt. at Sandia Base and I had completed three years of nurses training at Regina School of Nursing. We were married in the spring of 1949 and our first child was born in January of 1950.

During this time period, the first tract homes were being built in Albuquerque. As we recall the land for the church was donated and the Rev. James Stewart went door to door inviting people to become members. Bob and I had both been raised in small Methodist churches, where we and our families were known.....he in Alabama and I in Farmington. We responded to the invitation to join this small group. Memory tells me there were only twelve, but surely there were more than that!!

Surrounded by desert and small tract homes, the church was only one room. A small kitchen was located in the SE corner and we did have restrooms near the entry. Sunday School classes were held in the corners of the room.

In the winter of 1950-51, Bob was sent to Eniwetok as a MP during atomic testing exercises. I worked as a nurse at St. Joseph Hospital while he was gone. The little congregation of St. Johns became my family.

Later, Bob served on the Official Board during the time that the basement was dug along side the church for Sunday School classes. The men donated time and worked evenings to complete the basement. We also recall Bob frying chicken in that tiny kitchen for a chicken dinner to raise money for building.

We left the service and moved to Farmington in March of 1954. I still remember my tears at leaving St. John's Methodist Church.

Congratulations on your anniversary!

Sincerely,


Troyetta Batley

Russell Scott is our most continuous longtime member having been part of that charter group. He and his wife Imogene contributed greatly to getting the church started. Imogene served as Historian in the 1970's. Through her efforts much of St. John's early history is preserved.

So it was. The Spirit of God passed over a windswept, barren area and St. John's a full fledged, growing, loving, and Christ oriented church emerged.

History is not just a time line, since a time line takes events out of context. History is also our interpretation of the past. Just as each of us experiences the present differently so the past is interpreted by the individual's experience of that time and influenced by the times in which things are recalled.

We can learn from the past, but not by condemning or blindly praising it. We learn by asking: "How did we become what we are? - Why do we think the way we do? - What makes us act so?"

Objects and written records helps us through our imaginations to see and feel the richness of our past. As we try to understand what people were like a half century ago, we can assume them to have been no better - and no worse - than we are. Their world must have been as complex and as clear to them as ours is to us. Stories offer us more than heritage. They give us roots linking past to future and teach us how to take joy in and carry on in a changing world.

As we examine St. John's memories we can discern the spirit of God working among us and we continue to celebrate the abiding love and faithfulness that God has shown to this church, in this place through fifty years, and are assured of that faithfulness in the next fifty.

So ministry began at St. John's. In January of 1951 a hot water heater and a used kitchen stove were donated. A kitchen shower equipped the kitchen sufficiently so that the WSCS immediately set up a money making project - preparing dinners for the Heights Lions Club.

The need and thankfulness for a church in this area was stressed over and over. Many of those interviewed at our heritage dinners said that they joined St. John's because it was close to their home. Much love and appreciation was expressed in the form of service. Everything that could be was done through volunteer effort.

Mr. Cole suggested that we go out in "twos" for visitation just as they did in the scriptures. Visitation in various forms became and continued an important emphasis as a way of encouraging giving, as a tool for evangelism, and as a means of forming community.

Small wooden banks in the shape of a church, the "Little Church Banks", were used to provide extra income for many years. Members and constituents alike put a penny or more in their bank in thanks for each meal. Each home was visited monthly to pick up contributions. Rosemary Rogers commented about picking up these contributions, "This was my main way of getting acquainted."

The record shows that \$25 was sent to the Women's Christian Temperance Union marking the beginning of another emphasis which continued for many years, temperance.

J. C. Penny's had a good price of \$15 on choir robes and since the choir wanted robes for Easter 1952, they bought their own. Music was another early emphasis that continues.

Increase in numbers surprised and challenged the founders. Getting the church established occupied the congregation, but Rev. Stewart always reminded them of the the importance of "spiritualism". It was decided to proceed with phase one of the basement which would later serve as the foundation for the auditorium. With much volunteer help the work on this first phase was completed and the space divided into Sunday School rooms. On Saturdays volunteers painted and did whatever was needed to make the rooms more attractive and cheerful. Central heating was installed "in the least attractive room". At first the children were intimidated by the big old furnace but soon got over it.

Rev. Stewart remarked in response to an assessment from McMurry College that, "finances press us heavily..... at this time." Despite the financial crunch we managed to raise the weekly pay for janitorial cleaning from \$5 to \$10.

By 1953 attendance was well over 140 for church services and 224 were in Sunday School. Chairs were purchased to eliminate moving them back and forth from the basement for services. Junior church was begun and a second service was even discussed. MYF was growing, WSCS was to run a church nursery, and the first head usher was elected. (David) Maggart was the first acolyte. Cub scouts met at the church and later a Boy Scout Troop, #269, was founded. An early member said that the place would be full of boys. The Methodist Men's Club was chartered and sponsored a food stand at the New Mexico State Fair - profit for the church was surely welcomed.

Concern was expressed to the District Superintendent about a new church site being near enough to materially affect the future of St. John's. Later in 1961 St. John's was able to help this church, Asbury Methodist, financially and still later joined with them in mission outreach.

The four main commissions outlined in the Methodist Disciple were set up. Mr. B. M. Marshall became the first chairperson of the Official Board. Over the years the Board has dealt with many issues and made significant decisions setting the direction of the church.

1954 brought more growth and the second phase of the basement was completed. Outside a sprinkler system was installed and a piano was purchased for the inside. There were about 250 on the rolls with 200 active. SS attendance was 300. Nancy Gilfillan Riley recalls having Sunday School class in the choir loft in the original building, "I had my confirmation classes in the kitchen with Rev. James Stewart." Parking had to be regulated by the Board. For the sake of safety a fence was built around the basement roof and lighting installed. Incorporation papers were submitted at Quarterly Conference.

The Men's Club did an every member canvass while WSCS put out a cookbook and earned \$300 for the building fund. "Block Sundays" were held. Nancy explained, "All of us kids brought at least one quarter each week, because that quarter would buy one cinder block. That was our building fund, for what was to be the second sanctuary."

The Finance Committee was asked to set up a way to handle the many "drives" for funds. Questions were raised as just how to finance the church. Hope was expressed that classes would be motivated to buy their own chairs. Perhaps the motivation was to have a place to be seated.

The Board voted not to send a representative to a laymen's retreat to be held at Arrowhead Lodge as this facility had a bar and although not open, this would somehow be a "contribution toward a liquor establishment". The spirit of the meeting was approved but not the location. \$15 was subsequently sent to the Board of Temperance.

In 1955 Britelle, Ginner and Associates were engaged to develop a Master Plan for the church facility. This plan was to be based on Sunday School attendance and statistical projections for the area. Master plans assume we can decide for those in the future. This and other master plans were never completed in tact. On Easter Sunday there were 483 in Sunday School. Church membership was 350. Long time members recall packed and especially meaningful Maundy Thursday services during these early years.

The original large meeting room was designated Cole Fellowship Hall and was marked by a plaque honoring Mr. and Mrs. J. .R.. Cole who so faithfully did everything in their power to promote the spiritual and physical growth of St. John's.

An excerpt from the hand written Historical Record Book of St. John's dated December 24, 1950 tells about Mr. Cole:

"The congregation of St. John's is deeply indebted to James R. Cole for his leadership. Mr. Cole, now 78, has spent a long life in the service of the Methodist Church as a layman. He was a member of the Uniting Conference which brought the 3 branches of Methodism together in 1939. In 1939 Mr. Cole came to Albuquerque as district manager of the Southern Union Gas Co. In 1944 he helped to get Harwood Methodist Church going, and in the same year he took the lead in organizing Trinity Methodist. Then in 1950, he again took the leadership in the organization and building of St. John's, and the Bataan Memorial Hospital."

On January 9, 1955 an article entitled, "What About the Love Offerings" by Rev. James Stewart was published in the Christian Advocate. This set off a series of unhappy events in his personal life and ministry and raised controversial issues in the church. Rev. Stewart was in direct conflict with Bishop Angie Smith. Many in leadership roles at St. John's were active in support of Rev. Stewart and his stance. After trials, accusations, hearings, and much publicity the final outcome was that Rev. Stewart was removed by official action as a Methodist Minister and from membership in the Methodist Church.

A Memorial to the 1956 General Conference of the Methodist Church requesting the abolition of gifts and love offerings to Bishops, District Superintendents, and Members of their families was sent from the Official Board at St. John's dated 13 March 1955.

The church was supportive of Rev. Stewart as pastor and appreciative of his leadership. A Letter, dated Mar. 26, 1956, was sent to the District Superintendent, Rev. Willingham, supporting the return of Rev. Stewart to St. John's. Some thirty-five telegrams were sent to the Bishop requesting his return but to no avail. It was not to be. At our heritage dinners folks looking back to that situation commented that it was a terrible time and very painful. Some saw it as the result of autocratic leadership while others thought it was representative of the times in both secular and church affairs. It left divisions within the church that persisted for some years.

By 1956 the replacement value of the church was placed at \$68,000. In five and one half years the church's membership had grown to 430. Continued growth was both a blessing and a challenge. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the church's vision expanded. It was decided to build following the master plan with actual construction to take place in phases. Phase one was to build an interim sanctuary over the existing basement. Mr. Dick Richards chaired the building committee.



REV. & MRS. JAMES STEWART

Late in the year a parsonage on Leah Drive was purchased and furnished for the new pastor and his family. Rev. Kenneth Ford (31 years of age) was appointed to St. John's. Rev. Ford received 227 into membership his first year. Sunday School enrollment was 765 with an average attendance of 483. At that time it cost 1 cent to mail out "The Voice" newsletter.

Doris Bowen related that while living in Washington D.C., a neighbor upon learning of her upcoming move to Albuquerque told her to find Ken and Mildred Chenoweth. On

their first Sunday in town Galt and Doris attended St. John's because it was nearest to where they were staying. The folks that came forward to welcome them introduced themselves as the Chenoweths. This was good enough to convince them that St. John's was meant to be their church home.

This was the year, 1956, that the Men's Club began selling fireworks. 30% of the profit was to go to youth work. During those years much of what was bought was paid for by the Men's Club and WSCS / Wesleyan Service Guild. The church had to pay \$82 toward the paving of Manual and later protested an assessment of \$1800 to pave Phoenix Ave. Stewards were elected to be responsible for visiting a certain number of families for stewardship-finance drives. The church participated in a Methodist survey to help develop a "Christian personality." The choir helped St. John's celebrate its 6th birthday, no smoking was allowed in the buildings, and the Coke machine was to be locked on Sunday mornings. Sammy Isham volunteered to be the church secretary.

A comment at the heritage dinners: "All the action was in the basement. Most of our lives revolved around the children. We even made the Children's choir robes by hand. Primary chairs were made at the cost of \$1 each. Children - another continuing emphasis of St. John's.

1957 saw the completion of the interim sanctuary plus a remodeling of the basement. J. Porter & Sons was the contractor. The plan was to be in this sanctuary for three to five years until it was paid for. Permanent pews were decided upon and donated. The Music Committee recommended that the choir sing more "old favorite" hymns and more familiar works!



LITTLE CHAIRS MADE WITH LOVE
FOR \$1

The Men's Club was most distressed that a case of their cracker ball fireworks had disappeared. Rev. Ford recommended extensive visitation in light of our financial situation. A sidewalk was needed. Individual members of the Board bought copies of the RSV Bible for the third graders. It was noted that the door should be kept closed during worship because of flies. Layman's Sunday was held and conducted entirely by lay MEN. At Board meeting someone asked - what ever happened to our family night dinners?

Emphasis on temperance continued and at one time the membership was asked to sign an abstinence pledge. Some resisted recalling how good grandma's brandied fruit cake was. A 1957 MYF scrapbook indicates that the District Meeting was on Alcohol Abuse. From Nina Deberry, "I must tell a story proving the lasting impressions of Sunday School teachers. My good friend, Dolores Sundt, was the teacher for my son, Danny, when he was six or seven. We were watching TV when an ad for alcohol came on the screen. He turned to me with a serious face and said, 'Mom, alcohol can kill you!' At church that morning Dolores had put a worm in a glass of alcohol and it died! The children never forgot that lesson."

A rule stated that the keys to the church were to be taken off the gas meter and a roster kept of those who were issued keys - a sign we were growing up. Sunday school teachers were to be accredited. Two services were begun in 1958. A Communion table was donated and Loeda Richards made beautiful altar cloths. WSCS circles bought brown velvet kneeling pads for the altar. Sunday School space was a problem and buying buildings from Sandia Base was considered. Folding doors were placed in Cole Fellowship Hall to allow more Sunday School rooms. For a while chairs were rented, and at one time the teenagers met in the bowling alley due to lack of Sunday School rooms.



REV & MRS. KEN FORD

Our Advance Special was the Belgian Congo. It was urged that at least 10% of our budget should go toward missions. Food baskets for the needy were prepared. A preaching mission was held during Holy Week. Consensus was to "set the budget high instead of just adequate". A session was needed to develop goals and do planning as required by the Discipline. A Memorials Committee was appointed to determine policy. The Men's Club met with APD about their concern over juvenile delinquency in the city. Our Youth protested that all of the posters and banners urging people to give were undignified. They were allowed to paint a shuffleboard on the floor of Cole Fellowship Hall. There had been a drastic increase in membership. All of these things were part of the times in the late 1950's.

In 1959 Farrell Odom a "young" pastor came to be the pastor and found St. John's a challenge and an experience that after many years he looks back upon with satisfaction. He recalls, "The reported my listing my age as 42. congregation and I elected to allow my young age might Members frequently your age with a During my last year was becoming



REV. & MRS. FARRELL ODOM
25TH CELEBRATION

Albuquerque newspaper appointment to St. John's. Actually, I was 32. The assumed the reported age, the assumption feeling that be of some concern. commented - 'a man of young wife and family'. at St. John's my actual age known."

The following is Rev. Odom's memories as he wrote them:

My relationship with St. John's United Methodist Church began in July, 1959. The congregation numbered 768 members at the time of my appointment.

The congregation was sharply divided and had been for several years. There was, however, a united effort to curtail any and all ecclesiastical authority. I found the situation rather amusing, recognizing that all parties desired unity with none willing to risk indignities of defeat.

The struggle for unity lasted a little less than two years, the victory won. There were unfortunate casualties, but they were comparatively few. And, the membership and attendance began to literally explode. I believe it was in 1963 that the congregation gained 468 new members in one year, which to this day remains a record within the New Mexico Annual Conference.

There were some Sundays when the attendance at Morning Worship exceeded the membership, and one year the average attendance was about 96% of the total membership.

I believe it was the Easter Sunday of 1962 when we celebrated an attendance of 1,647. We had four morning services; 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, and 11:00. The sanctuary in use at that time was built to seat 250, had two naves with side aisles and a center aisle. It was, fortunately, a beautiful day and folk waited outside for a service to end so they could enter the sanctuary. The ushers escorted people out the side aisles and seated folk down the center aisle. Via this process a pew was being filled at the same time it was being emptied. No pew in the sanctuary was empty until the conclusion of the 11:00 service. The first Easter Sunday services in the new sanctuary (1963, I believe) enjoyed a total attendance of 2250.

At one time the average age of the adults within the congregation was about 37, the average education for each adult was one + degree, and each family had 2 + children, the majority of whom were in elementary grades. I, myself, was 32 - 38 years of age during my tenure, had three children, two were in grade school and one in middle school the year we departed St. John's.

A vast majority of the congregation consisted of young adults beginning their careers. They were "upward bound" and took the church with them in their ascending progresses. There were, in 1959, hardly enough youth to have a Methodist Youth Fellowship, and it was not until about 1964 that we had enough senior citizens to form the "Jolly Elders".

I remain amazed how that youthful congregation, most without any church leadership experience, could accomplish so much in so short a time. My own leadership experience was limited. I was out of seminary only three years when I assumed that pastorate. I often thought we were the blind leading the blind. Perhaps we were too inexperienced to know that we couldn't accomplish the

impossible, so we accomplished it before we found out we couldn't.

For me, the most frustrating task was that of structuring a church staff to service the rapidly growing congregation. We would no sooner inaugurate a structure than it was outmoded. This was frustrating to me, confusing to the congregation, and stressful to the staff.

The church staff kept graphic chart of Sunday Worship attendance for several years. The graph would show an attendance increase of 200-400 over any given Sunday of the previous year. Note: Rosemary Rogers was in charge of the graph, and perhaps she will remember.

I openly acknowledge that St. John's outgrew me and my pastoral abilities. I had a mental picture of two fellows standing on a ledge looking down into a narrow canyon. They observe a fast moving throng of folk with one person slightly in the lead, running as fast as possible. The fellows on the ledge assumed the person in front to be the leader. I identify myself as that person, but I do not view myself as the leader. I thought of myself as running to avoid being overrun, but I wasn't fast enough.

My principle pastoral ministry years were 1956 - 1965, nine years. I enjoyed in so brief a time that which most pastors only dream of. My years at St. John's remain the highlight of my life and ministerial career.

Respectfully Submitted;

Farrell D. Odom

Farrell D. Odom

Although all of his recollections cannot be printed here, the following summary reflects his experience as St. John's senior pastor from 1959-1965:

"All that I have shared is intended to pay homage to the magnificence of the congregation of St. John's. They struggled with the tremendous growing pains of the church and were victorious in their efforts to establish a strong, effective, and stable body of Christ. I choose to forever honor their courage, dedication, and remarkable vision."

A member from Rev. Odom's tenure recalls that in his sermons he often used the illustration of plowing behind mules.

According to observers Board meetings were contentious at this time. It seems that the agenda of the founding group and that of many of the newcomers differed. Farrell Odom walked into this situation and writes about it in his letter. This is borne out in the minutes of the Official Board during those years. More than once Rev. Odom reminded

the Board of the necessity to conduct themselves in a true Christian manner and allow everyone to have his own opinion without rancor. At one point Mr. McMaster presented a plan for improving the caliber of decisions made by the Official Board. They decided to elect their own officers. An index was established so that motions and resolutions of standing force could be located. Board meetings were not to last beyond 9:00 p.m. and members were to have written reports. It was decided that a fellowship time was to follow board meetings. Thereafter the minutes always ended with "cookies and coffee and fellowship followed". One chairperson of the Board ruled that no more "we must have faith statements" would be allowed. Despite struggles the Official Board made many important decisions which enabled the church to meet the challenges of growth and finances.

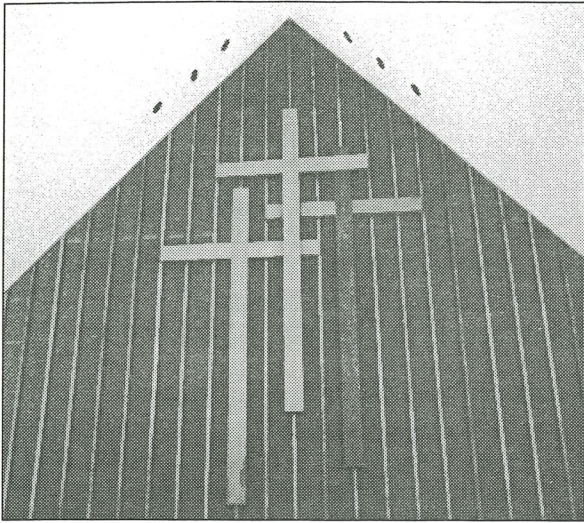
As the infamous sixties began few could have guessed the extreme societal changes about to take place. St. John's had to cope with those changes and with continued rapid growth.

Rev. Odom quickly noticed that he needed more office help and another phone line. Office space was cramped. How to best staff the growing church was a challenge. A multigraph and addressograph were purchased and minutes were to be mailed to the Board members. A newsletter was begun. Sadly, late in the year it was announced there would be no directory as the duplicating machine had been stolen. Staffing during these years included Mr. Chamberlain, a business manager, an organist, a youth director to work under the education director, and Mr. John Jolly, candidate for local preacher's license, as unpaid assistant pastor to work on membership and evangelism. A full time secretary and other office staff was also added and a personnel manual adopted. Mabel Allen was hired as Director of Food Services at \$1 per hour of actual on duty time. The pastor was given 14 days vacation. Rev. Odom requested more administrative leeway.

Plans were presented for the building of another sanctuary. The Building Committee reported (confidently) that "...have considered all the needs of the church now and in the future." The proposed building would fulfill all these needs, but first \$6000 was needed for an architect's fee. The Board authorized a 12,500 sq. ft. - 1000 capacity sanctuary, modification to the facility for church school, and a 7100 sq. ft. - 500 person social hall. All this was to be accomplished as feasible. The Building Finance Committee was authorized to procure building funds of \$350,000. In 1961 the purchase of two more lots, costing about \$44,500, made a total of 21 lots. The property was squared up from the alley to the street on the north - about 5 acres. The City of Albuquerque was enveloping the original isolated single structure built on the mesa in 1950. The corner lots on Manual were for sale at \$20,000 but it was voted not to buy them. The Board voted not to cooperate with rezoning of the area, but The City Planning Commission vacated California Street and the property was rezoned to O-1. A turning space easement was granted for California which meant tearing down the backstop, a trauma to the baseball program.

Additional expenses were incurred and the amount for the building project had to be adjusted. Only the sanctuary could be built at that time. The Building Committee was given a vote of confidence. The architect was W. C. Kruger and Associates. This was another master plan that only portions of materialized.

It seems Farrell Odom insisted that the church must be in the shape of a cross. Another cross story is told on Rev. Odom. Having continued difficulty with the contractor, he reportedly remarked that if he didn't get this thing straightened out by next week, I may hang him on one of these crosses.



Other things were going on as well. Rev. Odom felt that systematic calling was not happening and vowed to do it himself. Later teams assisted by Rev. Wilshire, retired DS, did visitation. An every member canvass was declared a success, and adult Sunday School classes did visitation one evening a week.

A Social Involvement Commission was appointed and needed members interested in world peace and temperance. Stan Sager, at the request of Rev. Odom, began the AM adult Sunday School class for couples under 40 years of age and it continues today (2000) with some of the original group, who are now a tad over

forty. Several subsequent adult Sunday School classes were spin-offs from the original AM (Active Methodists) class. The Liquor Dealers Wives were NOT allowed to handle the rummage sale for the AM Class. The minutes recorded that "we have not given up on temperance."

The Men's Club published a Cookbook in 1961. Nancy Gilfillan Riley wrote that after she was married at St. John's by Rev. Odom, she went overseas for a few years. Her mother sent her a copy of the Men's Club Cookbook. Not knowing how to cook, this book became her "cooking Bible" which she uses to this day although it is now held together by a rubber band. The Men's Club, also, sponsored square dance lessons as a fund-raiser and a resulting square dance club, the Sashayers, met at St. John's for a number of years. John and Dorothy Coleman chaired the group and among the dancers were the Deberrys and the Littlefords. They had bylaws which seemed to be revised regularly according to the records.

The Boy Scouts helped pay to replace curtain rods which they had ruined.

It was decided that Farrell Odom and the District Superintendent would preside at groundbreaking scheduled for November 5, 1961. In accepting an invitation to the consecration of the new sanctuary in September of 1962, Bishop Smith wrote, "I'll pay my own expenses."

Pews, planters, hymnals were obtained as gifts and memorials. Methodist Men laid the sidewalk. The architects Master Plan for landscaping needed to be implemented. Gordon Walhood, Sr. remembers: "Upon completion of the new sanctuary, church members immediately followed up on a landscaping plan, the fruits of which we see today. All costs were covered by memorials. All of the original lawn sprinklers system was installed by volunteers. Again the good Lord was with us in building our church home."

After moving into the new sanctuary attendance soared sometime reaching 800 with the average 697. Attendance was up by 14% and giving was up by 25%. \$100,000 was now needed yearly. Rev. Odom thought that having the narthex made us more friendly.

A professional handled the bond drive to finance the new building. The bonds were secured by a second mortgage. Rev. Odom noted that bond sales were hurt by skepticism, by the young average age of our members, and by a recession in the economy. In hopes of

keeping fundraising to a minimum and support a single financial drive for the unified budget a professional from McMurry College was hired to assist.

The MYF voted to pledge 50\50 to church and MYF. They were not allowed to sell candy on Sundays, but they could have a carnival in the parking lot as long as no games of chance were included. The youth sent a letter to Congress urging that surplus wheat be sent to starving Chinese Communists. They held their first car wash and purchased a bright blue bus. The youth also sold a record of organ and piano music by Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Paden. It was described as being "of semi-cultural" nature and was to be in Hi Fi. Sales would help finance camp. Nancy Riley remembers: "..... when I was in MYF we went on a camping trip to Tijeras Canyon. I now live in Edgewood and travel I-40. I have found the spot where we camped. It is halfway up Sedillo Hill south of I-40 (old Rt.66) by some pine trees and there are houses on it. I thought I was really in the wilderness back then."

Some things never change - it was reported that the kitchen was being left in deplorable condition. The Youth thought it was too hot in the basement - imagine! After much discussion, a memorials policy was adopted. There was to be a memorials book kept in an appropriate place for recording past and future memorials. No more plaques!

Fifth Sundays were Missions Sundays. Ben Kurakata was brought from Japan and sponsored at Perkins School of Theology as he pursued a BD degree. Contribution was made toward a scholarship for a young Navajo, Fred Yazzi, who was studying for the ministry. We enabled a church in Bernalillo to remain open.

Holding the first of their now traditional 2nd Wednesday potluck luncheons, the Jolly Elders came into being, and has continued for some forty years. Rev. Odom was the first president. The purpose of the Jolly Elders was described as "a social club for those over 55 to meet and work together". According to Lola Eagle Schultz, "The group grew in numbers from a modest beginning. Name changes have been proposed over the years but have been voted down, resulting in the retention of the name which conjures an image of a bunch of exuberantly happy, gray-haired adults." They enjoy good food, good fellowship and entertainment and have donated to many church projects over the years.

Baby-sitting for choir practice was initiated. An Inquirers class was "strongly recommended" before church membership. WSCS under the leadership of Cindy Jollenston hosted the Conference Annual Meeting.

In a real estate deal ten acres, one block east of Wyoming and two blocks south of Montgomery, was purchased by ~~the church~~. Four and one half acres was to be for a new Methodist church site and the remainder subdivided into lots for sale. By 1965 this new church property became a financial burden and was sold to Hacienda Realty.

A big emphasis was put on education. Church school enrollment reached 1203 with 816 attending on one Sunday. There were so many attending that Saturday sessions were needed. 150 Bibles were given to third graders. A kindergarten was opened, and the Mother's Day Out Nursery required a fenced area.

A new pastor was appointed in 1965, Dr. Bervin Caswell. The Apache parsonage was purchased and remodeled. WSCS refurnished it. Membership had grown by leaps and bounds from 500 to 1900 in six years. There was a budget deficit. Dr. Caswell called for prayers about the financial situation. A three year agreement was entered into with the General Board of Lay Activities for counseling, guidance and assistance in canvassing and stewardship.

120 youngsters attended camp that year. Dr. Caswell emphasized support for the Waco Home along with the New Church Club. He held Baccalaureate services for our High School graduates. In 1966 as part of a God and Country Award project of the Boy Scouts, the three wooden crosses were mounted on the south wall of the sanctuary. These three original crosses now (2000) grace the north wall of the remodeled sanctuary.

What's new - the tables were receiving rough handling. Merle Reece, one of our volunteer carpenters, was having a difficult time keeping the metal plates attached to the front doors. These were eventually replaced. He built a new communion rail and a baptismal fount.

The Men's Club was raising funds so that proper signs for the building could be installed. It seems that financial statements needed to be more understandable .

In the pictorial directory of 1967 Dr. Caswell refers to the "manifest destiny" of St. John's. Membership was reported at 2,235.

After four years the custodians, the Taylors, were leaving. The church is people. In her remembrances Rosemary Rogers, faithful and valued long time employee in the administrative offices of the church, shows the contribution of people to the workings of the church.

ROSEMARY REMEMBERS - - -

My first visit to St. John's was in 1953. When I entered and saw a few pews along the sides of the room and folding chairs in the rest of it I thought, "I guess they will be putting in the pews next week." Not true. Shortly after that first visit I was working in the Sunday School with the youngest children. One morning I thought the gentleman there with his boy was our choir director, James Shreve, so I asked this person to lead the children in singing for their action song. It turned out the gentleman was Harold Buell instead of Jim Shreve. He apparently felt he could not sing any better than I could and declined. I didn't know many people at that time. The first Education Committee meeting I attended, I mentioned we were very cramped in the room for the youngest children. The room next door wasn't being used. Rev. James Stewart and one of the other members of the committee promptly inspected and said they would open up that room for our use. I went home thinking, "My goodness I must be careful what I say." However, we did enjoy the extra space.

I became a member of the Women's Society of Christian Service and was soon collecting for "Little Banks". They were ~~little~~ wooden banks and the thought was that one penny should be put in before each meal. Most people put in a dollar a month and we picked up their offering once a month. This was my main way of getting acquainted.

I became the part-time bookkeeper in 1957. The first Official Board meeting I attended was an experience I shall never forget. There was considerable disagreement about everything and the Book of Discipline was opened and quoted often. The votes were always the same - no giving on either side. Shades of Congress! I don't remember what the discussion was about, just the animosity was memorable. However this evened out over time - quite a bit of time I'm afraid. In spite of that we moved into our new interim sanctuary that spring. We had our new beautiful pews in by December 15. One of the first things I was asked to do as bookkeeper was to go to the bank to make the last draw on the loan for the new construction. Upon making the request it was discovered that the request went over the amount left in the loan agreement. The bank was very helpful and made it possible for the final draw. They certainly were wonderful. Guess they figured I didn't know what I was doing so they didn't give me any trouble!

By 1960 the church was able to hire a full time person to be at the church. I had been doing my work at home and did not wish to be away from the children so I resigned. In 1963 I returned as part time bookkeeper and duplicating person and later became full-time Administrative Assistant. We consecrated the new sanctuary September 23, 1962. The mimeograph was in the basement where the heating and cooling system is located, which meant you had to go to the basement any time you wished to make copies. Stencils were our means of duplicating for many years. What a great thing our office machines of today are!

Horace and Sudie Taylor were memorable custodians. They were very devout Berean Baptist members and apparently believed in predestination. One day Horace bumped the south glass door with the buffer intending to go out. Instead the glass broke. He said, "I guess it was just time for the glass to break." I thought to myself, "Perhaps if you had opened the door first, it would not have broken." Anyway they were nice people and Sudie was the best duster I have ever known. She dusted every chair and every spot on it. She said she loved the cleaning because it cleared her mind and was peaceful work. Another custodian I would like to mention was a young Indian man, Charles Chinana. He was very special to me and I was very sorry when he felt he must leave. He did come back to visit me a couple of times and I cherish the Indian pots he had made which I purchased from him.

There have been so many persons who have volunteered at St. John's. I would like to mention a few. There was Mr. William Blackburn who did our mimeographing of the bulletins, which had to be slip-sheeted. He did much of our duplicating for us for years. Also during that time two of our mainstay collators and help in putting booklets etc. together were Gladys Richardson and Esther Frink.

Mr. Earl Nail was our handy maintenance volunteer. Mr. Nail was known by his family as "Tack" because he was a small nail! His son always liked magazines and we gave him many which I am sure made his family unhappy at times.

Mr. Richard Montgomery worked many hours on the yard and other maintenance projects. He was such a part of our staff family and was greatly missed when he could no longer do so much volunteering.

One day Mr. Paul Friend called and asked if we had any maintenance work that needed to be done. I thought he wanted a paying position so I told him we had no openings. He stated he wanted something to do as he was retired and didn't like sitting around too much. I asked him to come down and we'd see what could be arranged. He began immediately and from then on worked almost full time as a volunteer. In fact I often urged him to take it a bit easier when he was digging out sprinklers etc. He was a very well read person. When he wasn't working at St. John's he was usually at the library reading. His health failed quite quickly. I was at his apartment the night before he passed away. He will always be special in my memory.

And then there is Lloyd and Phyllis Parker who have done so very much at St. John's. They moved away for a few years and we were so very happy to have them back. Phyllis was the best baker I have ever known - her pies and rolls were delicious. She was always ready and willing to do anything in the kitchen. She was our kitchen volunteer and then our kitchen employee for some time. Lloyd has always been helpful with yard work and maintenance.

Donna Rehnberg was an early volunteer in the Sunday School records department. She looked up and put the five digit zip codes on all our records when they first came in use. That was certainly a great help to me as we did not have much hired help in those days.

These people and many more come to mind when I think of the past years at St. John's. Russell Foster and Paul Stanford are two of the Finance Committee chairmen I must mention. They were both very helpful and I recall how devastated I felt when I heard Paul had had a heart attack. I just had to go see how he was doing. Much to my relief he was doing fairly well. However, he did resign as Finance Chairman which was a great loss.

We have had many good pastors and staff over the years. I do believe our appointment system is superior to other ways of receiving ministers. Each of our pastors have had their own personalities and strengths. St. John's has prospered and is a very dynamic church in part due to those very diverse types of leadership.

I am very grateful for the support that was given me in all the years I have been at St. John's. I retired May 1, 1993, and continue to appreciate St. John's congregation and programs.

Building expansion was on the agenda for several years. Stan Sager, suggested building fund visitations to determine financial support for the building of a fellowship hall, class rooms and office area. A building fund campaign was needed to expand as per the 1962 plan. It would take \$495,000 to carry out the architect's plan. In a fluid money market a loan to refinance the indebtedness and for new construction could not be found. Paul Stanford, for years our dedicated Finance Chairperson, wisely suggested a new approach - cut back plans to match the money available. New construction was impossible at the time, so, remodeling what we had was the answer. Charge Conference voted to allow building funds to go directly to debt retirement. WSCS offered to buy tile for Cole Fellowship Hall and would cook dinner for any group willing to lay the tile. Remodeling of the old interim sanctuary building was let out for bid. The Sunday School rooms were given new curtains and the kitchen was remodeled. Air conditioning and heating was installed under the sanctuary. The city paved the alley and our parking lot was crowded and needed paving.

Dr. Caswell gave quizzes at board meetings - he wanted them to stay informed. Dr. Gooding, a very active layman, moved that the Board buy "The Discipline of the Methodist Church".

Activities and programs showed the mark of the sixties. Race Relations Sunday was observed, drug addiction and narcotics were studied, and the Men's Club sponsored a counseling program for elementary children as none was being provided in the public schools. The movie, Quo Vadis, was used as a money maker. Job Corp girls were hosted by member families. The Albuquerque Youth Federation was to have a "coffee house" in Fellowship Hall and the boy's softball team was given an annual watermelon feed.

The MYF asked permission to hold a dance every other month - right in the church if you please! They were holding pancake breakfasts to finance a trip to east Texas. As you might guess, the women were holding another bazaar to raise money for missions. VBS would have an enrollment fee. The men were holding monthly meetings at the Albuquerque Gospel Mission - singing and giving talks. They also had a "Hobo Nite" (?) and they sold name tags.

Bervin and Etha Mae Caswell
3526 Paint Brush
Abilene, Texas 79606
(915) 695-4213

February 3, 2000

Ms. Norma J. Argo
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear friend:

Etha Mae and I have remembered through the years the wonderful experience of being in the pastorate of St. John's during the years 1965-1971. It was both a joy and a challenge.

① The church had been growing so rapidly that it had accumulated a rather large amount of debt - building program and otherwise. In an effort to deal with this situation, we were able to secure the leadership of the General Board of Lay Activities, headquartered in Nashville, Tenn. They worked with us for a few years, and were very helpful.

② Although there was need for the ministry of an associate pastor, we could hardly see our way clear to ask for one, because of the money involved. But finally we decided to take the plunge, and asked for Charlie Price. He came, and started with us in 1968.

As you know, or maybe can guess, it has turned out that his stay there (as a full-time associate, or a part-timer) is perhaps dependent upon Charlie's life expectancy! Glory be.

May you good people have a wonderful time of celebration of St. John's first half century. And blessings upon that useful servant-church. Peace, joy, and strength be yours.

Thanks for asking...

Sincerely,
Bervin Caswell

In June of 1968 Rev. Charles E. Price was hired as Assistant Pastor to work with membership and evangelism commission to bring back inactive members and get new members involved. "Operation Return to Church" was used to try to reactivate some families and an every member visitation was set for the fall. New Member potlucks were initiated and talent sheets were filled out. Katherine Price became director of the children's choir and served for a number of years. She was the resident pianist for St. John's socials.

We became St. John's United Methodist Church with the merger of the Methodist Church and the United Brethren Church in 1968. With this came a new operating structure. Charge Conference replaced Quarterly Conference and in June the first meeting under the Administrative Board/Council on Ministries was held. Stan Sager was the first Council on Ministries chairperson. Stan has held most, if not all of the responsible positions in the church over the years and unselfishly offers his time, expertise and wise counsel whenever and wherever needed. He has served as lay delegate from the NM Conference to three General Conferences.



STAN SAGER LAY PERSON EXTRODINAIRE

the closing hymn was "God Be With You Til We Meet Again". He leaned over to the person next to him and said quietly, "And for some of you that will be another year."

It is to the credit of all of our former pastors that they made these transitions as smooth as possible and a credit to the membership that few if any left the church because of these appointive changes. St. John's has embraced the connectional system and itinerant ministry of the Methodist Church over the years, always welcoming our new pastors and we have a great record of paying our apportionments in full.

A new apportionment formula no longer based on the pastor's salary but membership resulted in discussion of purging the roles.

Bishop Angie Smith was replaced in 1968 and the New Mexico and Northwest Texas came under one bishop, Bishop Alsie Carleton. A Lay Witness Mission group came with both positive and negative results to the life of the church. A continuing Men's Prayer Group, which meets to this day every other Tuesday morning at 6:00 a.m. for prayer, donuts, discussion and fellowship grew out of this.

The highlight of 1971 was that one of our boys, Robert Fisher, entered Perkins School of Theology. It was to be Dr. Caswell's last year at St. John's and a time of transition. Long time members at the heritage luncheons commented that Bervin and Etha Mae were a much loved couple at St. John's. He had a great sense of humor. A story told on him is that one Easter morning

Claudeport, N. M.

Jan. 31, 00



Dear friends -

It scarcely seems possible that
At John's time is almost 50 years old.

I was honored to serve the Church
and each of you from June 1, 1971 to
June 1, 1974.

I view my time with you with
a lot of pleasure. If you remember
we worked hard to get through a
building fund debt and back on our
feet financially. I was pleased to
leave with this accomplished.

There are two things that stand
out during the three years with
you.

After a lengthy and thorough
Membership Class I received (on
your behalf) 103 new mem. on
Palm Sunday morning. They were
mostly by Profession of Faith and
Baptism. Some of the youngsters
parents joined with them by
Certificate of Transfer. It was the
most worshipful experience of
my 41 years as a full time United
Methodist minister.

Secondly, I recall an Easter Sun.
Evening when our Chancel Choir
supported me with ^{and} wonderful
presentation of, "Jesus Christ Superstar".
The whole church more than 800
people crowded into the Sanctuary!

There was many other wonderful
experiences with you and I miss
you all very much.

Sincerely,
Richard J. Johnson

In seven months we had removed 716 from the rolls leaving membership at 1884.

Rev. Charlie Price writes about this period:(the late 60's and the 70's) the charismatic influence was taking hold in many main-line congregations, including the Methodists. Unrest on the campuses, the "new morality issue" and the emerging of the "Jesus People" created a situation which found many people, including St. John's people, going to independent congregations such as Christian Center, Faith Chapel, and the like.one of the reasons many left our membership...."

St. John's sent a resolution to General Conference regarding the "new morality" issue.

Dick Whitwam was the new pastor. He was a member of the National Guard and in 1974 received an honorary doctorate from McMurry College. He requested neighborhood parties as a way for him to become acquainted with such a large congregation. On one Palm Sunday Dr. Whitwam received 103 new members. Most were youngsters and their parents.

It was noted that there were a lot of young people congregating in the narthex when they should be in classes. The pastor sent a note to their parents. Pronto!

At a special called session of the Charge Conference a new parsonage on Gen. Chenault was approved for the senior pastor. The assistant pastor moved into the Apache parsonage at that time. A Christmas open house was held at the new parsonage.

"Art Shows" featuring St. John's artist were the brain child of Helen Whitwam, an artist herself. We saw the beginning of New Member Desserts with a host family for each new family. WSCS held an enchilada dinner to help pay for completely draping the parlor. The glass at the rear of the sanctuary needed drapes as the milling around in the narthex was distracting to worship services, and if movies were to be shown, coverings for the windows in Cole Fellowship Hall would be needed.

Maundy Thursday candlelight services continued, and Catacomb services were held in the boiler room. Through donations the acoustical cloth for the organ was replaced in back of the three crosses. Steve Maggart was to get our signs lighted as a scout project.

Mr. Dick Montgomery was recognized for his countless hours of donated service toward maintenance, repair, and remodeling. A floater was added to our insurance program to cover volunteers. Due to lack of attendance the Methodist Men was discontinued.

Pat Boone was to be at the Civic Auditorium for ecumenical Easter Services. We contributed \$500 to the New Mexico Interchurch Agency for social concerns work.

Giving of altar gifts at communion and God's Box donations went toward a Communion Fund to help the needy.

The Youth built a new youth chapel in the east end of the Education Building in memory of Warrant Officer John Wesley Frink, a young man from St. John's who gave his life in the Viet Nam War. With the permission of the Trustees they raised funds and used memorial funds given for John Frink to get this accomplished.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

1955 - 1975



Over the years several of our youths have met untimely deaths and this is but one of the responses of compassion and support that have been given to their grieving families.

Several of our youth were sponsored as Amigos de los Americas to go to Central America to do immunizations. We had Youth Sunday with services conducted by the Youth.

COM, after discussions concerning the purpose of the church, determined the main purpose of St. John's was "to spread the good news of the Lord, Jesus Christ". This statement was adopted as a goal by the Administrative Board. Another goal adopted for 1953 was to add 300 to our rolls.

The Wesleyan Service Guild merged with WSCS and reorganized to become the United Methodist Women. Ken McIntosh, a missionary to China, came to interpret the Advance.

Walter Dodson, worship chairperson, reported that fine music was being developed - "some beautiful and some different". "Celebrate Life" and "Jesus Christ Super Star" were presented by the choir. A choir retreat was held. Jill Aubrey, one of our youth, was selected as a Continental Singer, the only one from New Mexico.

Charlie Price attended a "Disaster Workshop" in Denver. He was "in charge of disasters" for the New Mexico Conference.

St. John's had financial problems so salary increases were postponed until later. A representative from the General Board of Global Ministry came to help with the finance drive. A 24 hour prayer vigil was held at the church in conjunction with the finance campaign. On Pledge Sunday workers were to go out and gather pledges from members. It was suggested a special drive be conducted to pave the parking lot.

Dr. Whitwam left to become District Superintendent in El Paso and Dr. M. Buren Stewart was to be the new pastor at St. John's and served for the next nine years. Jim Collins, Ad. Board Chairperson, reported at the beginning of 1975 that 1/2 of the goals for 1974 had been accomplished. Right away an impressive "needs" list was compiled from pew cushions to a steeple. There was discussion about purchasing the property between the church and Menaul but we declined.

Rev. Price was recognized for his service as a volunteer police chaplain. The Nuzum family was allowed to run a financial campaign so they could go to China as Christian teachers.

The church was very active between 1974 and 1983: We supported a Campus Center for McMurry College, The Billy Graham Crusade, a Mission Saturation Week, Harwood Girl's School, Amigos, Phillips Chapel Day Care, the Storehouse, Blood Bank, rides for

cancer patients, refugee families and more. We were involved in a church-wide study of Jonah. The Philosophy of Christian Womanhood, Ten Brave Christians, PET, Rent-a-Granny, Parents Day Out, Evangelism Explosion, An Experiment in Practical Christianity, Gib Richards Magic Shows, MEE, Play Coop, Lamaze were but some of the church's activities. We held classes for the hearing impaired, honored those married 50 years, and had a program of Arts and Crafts and Recreation for adults. There were numerous other emphases during this period including singles. A summary of Kay Worth's account of how "Prime Time Singles" got started follows:

"One score and two years ago there was brought forth in St. John's United Methodist Church a new singles organization dedicated to the proposition that singles in this church shall have the opportunity of increasing their social life with a group of like-minded people."

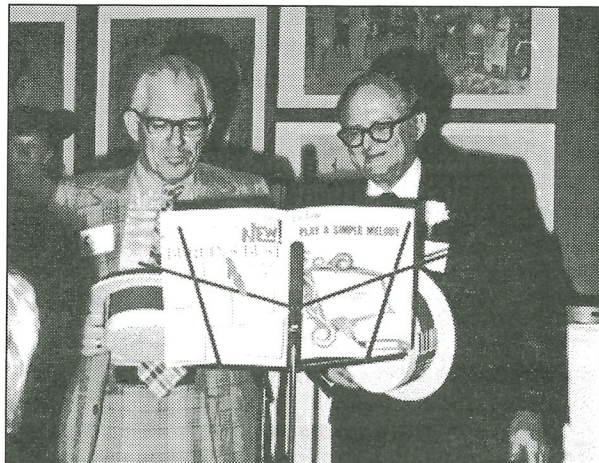
A group of nineteen singles (ages 20 to 90 were invited) from St. John's attended a conference for singles held at Sacramento Methodist Assembly. Subsequently a meeting was held at Kay's home to plan a luau as a gala event to get things started. Sherry Lee secured entertainment and Kay arranged for the Hawaiian feast (no poi). Lawn chairs were spread out in a huge circle in the back yard. And then, Kay recalls fortune smiled as it started to rain. Everyone scrambled for the back porch and it was party time. The entertainment was great, the food delicious, and conversation flowed.

Trips made together to the Texas Pageant, to the Grand Canyon, to Durango to ride the narrow gauge, to the Anasazi Pageant were all great. The group has no dues, no official membership, no good works except to make strangers welcome.

"How wonderful it has been to enjoy lunch out after church each Sunday, card parties, picnics - whatever this great group of Christian people decide."

We had a "Friendly Visitation" campaign and again went out "two by two" not for finances but for witnessing. There was an Altar Guild and a Fine Arts Committee. We had a bell group, a guitar group, and the music department presented Mozart's Missa Brevis in F. An Allen Digital Computer Organ was purchased and installed for \$24,770. (1976) We paved the parking lot and built the Outdoor Fellowship Hall (patio). A lighted outdoor cross was installed at the south end of the sanctuary to mark our location and witness to the surrounding area.

Lee Bitticks chaired the successful 25th Anniversary Celebration. At the banquet held at the Airport Marina Hotel some 200 persons enjoyed the entertainment with a skit and Charlie Price and Bervin Caswell singing a duet, "Won't You Play a Simple Melody". When Charlie called Dr. Caswell to ask if he would do this, always the wit, Dr. Caswell replied, "They must be in a bad way for talent for that program." It was a memorable weekend! 1975 was an important year in the life of St. John's. Dr. Stewart has said the 25th Anniversary Celebration did as much for the church as a revival.



SIMPLY BERVIN AND CHARLIE

Dr. Lyle Schaller, Local Church Administrative Planning Consultant, was engaged to help set a course for St. John's.

His report was very thorough and helped us to take a look at ourselves and our goals. This report has proved valuable in the ensuing years. Dr. Schaller told us that we were a very



EVEN THE PASTORS WORE COSTUMES

reliable custodian.

We had some catchy themes for our finance campaign: Striving to Excel; Believe - Achieve; Promises, Promises; To Insure a Destiny. In 1976 the budget went over \$200,000 for the first time.

On the 4th of July 1976 we celebrated our nation's bicentennial with a church-nation centered program. We wore period costumes and had "dinner on the ground" following morning services. Ruth Vermillion recalls how much her family enjoyed this day. Particularly she remembers Betsy Gruchalla came as a wonderful Statue of Liberty. She wore a green gown, had a crown and torch, and painted her face and hair green. Even the pastors wore costumes.

A Building Committee was appointed in 1978. After lots of input it was decided that we would need a professional type kitchen (Bob Sykes insisted that he never wanted to attend another potluck at St. John's!), administrative offices to be all together for efficiency and staff morale, a large fellowship hall, classrooms and a parlor/chapel. Sherry Lee saw to it that child sized potties among other things for children were in the plan. Groundbreaking was held on a cold Dec. 10, 1978. Bradbury and Stamm were to be the builders with Don Schlegel the architect.

We took out a loan for \$800,000 at 9.75% interest with a 20 year amortization to be re-negotiated every five years. This amount would not include furnishings. It was an inflationary economy. The city made us pay for fire hydrants to protect our new facility so we were forced to borrow \$75,000 at floating prime! Many families made truly sacrificial three year pledges to get the new building which was consecrated in January 20, 1980. We sold off anything we could salvage from the construction. One Sunday one of our ushers spotted a visitor wondering through the building and inquired if



MRS. JEWELL GRIMMER

he needed help. The man stated that he sensed a special spirit in this church and he was trying to figure out what was going on.

We saw the need to buy fifty-two padded chairs. Perhaps those voting for this had sat through a committee meeting or two. The Friendship Class was allowed to put a United Methodist symbol at the east end of Fellowship Hall. For a while we had kitchen managers. The most remembered was Phyllis Parker who could turn out a fine meal for a crowd. Her cinnamon rolls were unsurpassed only by her sweet spirit. As part of the landscaping plan a wooden deck was built outside the parlor\chapel. The completion of this addition was truly a turning point for St. John's ministry and enabled the church to become one of the leading churches in the New Mexico Annual Conference.

Dr. Gooding and Dr. Stewart were elected to lead the delegation from our NM Conference to the 1980 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. We hosted formal investiture services for the new DS, Brodace Elkins.

Jack Nuzum describes the Bethel Bible Study:

BETHEL BIBLE STUDY

There are literally hundreds of St. Johnites who will instantly recognize the concept "Blessed to be a blessing" and associate it with a) a principal theme of the Bible; b) one of dozens of concepts memorized as part of the Bethel Bible Study; and c) a blond Hebrew Abraham, pictured on the Bethel visual aids.

In the late Seventies, Pastor Buren Stewart recognized the need for serious Bible study in the congregation. He and Gladys attended the training session in Wisconsin for the Bethel Series and started the first teachers' training session. There were strict limits on the numbers and the time commitment. We gave reports (including a couple members who presented via Christian clowning!), took memory tests, essay tests, and gradually started understanding the sermon texts each Sunday in greater depth.

Those of us in the first class met every Tuesday in the parlor for two years. Then the Series expanded into the congregational phase. Each of the teachers who had been trained recruited a class, and those classes went for two years. By the end of this first phase, Bethel had impacted hundreds of members and greatly increased the Biblical literacy of the congregation.

Since its inauguration in 1979 at St. John's, Bethel has been an integral part of the education curriculum. Bernie and Phyllis Hulme taught a children's version in the Sunday School. Pat Murphy continued offering ongoing courses after the first phase was over, and for the past several years David and Regina Hunter have been teaching both congregational and teacher training sessions of Bethel. It has changed countless lives. It led Carol and me to mission in China for a year, prepared me to teach Bible Literature at Manzano High School, has helped give people confidence to teach Sunday School, prepared lay speakers, and enriched personal devotions. Some of us Bethel graduates wanted the experience to continue and formed a Christian Classics Sunday School Class that still meets during the early service hour. Bethel was a turning point in the first half century of St. John's spiritual life.

The Women's Study Group sponsored a seminar entitled "Women in the Church, New Thought for New Action". For the first time an ordained Methodist female pastor preached at St. John's. Buren Stewart allowed for our diversity. On Laity Sunday a lay person actually gave the sermon and we had a Sunday worship service conducted by our

clown ministry group. John Wesley dropped by one Sunday, but nothing could surpass the departure from the regular sermon like the "Game of Life" presented on Super Bowl Sunday by Dr. Stewart, Dr. Davey, and Rev. Price. It was said in those days that if you didn't care for today's service, come next week it will be different.



ALWAYS CHILDREN AND CROSSES

In 1979 about five hundred of us witnessed Jan and Charlie Price exchange wedding vows right after the last worship service. The new Mrs. Price right away arranged for a shelf to be built to separate the actual kitchen from the Fellowship Hall itself making serving easier and improving the appearance of the kitchen. Jan later served as chairperson of the kitchen committee and has co-chaired the Hospitality Committee. A request she could not fulfill led to the establishment of the Sunday morning Coffee Fellowship, a project that has lasted twenty years and besides being self-supporting has made donations towards other projects. In recent years Jan has been Wedding Coordinator and her calm manner has reassured many a nervous bride and mother of the bride.

Family Campouts in the Pecos were enjoyed by many. The children who were there will remember "the rope" and fishing lessons and ball games. The

adults hiked, did some bird watching, and got to know one another in a special setting. The publicity for these campouts was terrific. The Family Council set up a tent on the front lawn of the church and cooked breakfast on a Coleman stove as we gathered for services. A ninety year old woman remarked, "I thought I had lived long enough to see everything!" as Dave Percy plopped a roll of toilet paper on the lectern to emphasize that we should remember the essentials. Campfire singing and worship services united young and old in Christian fellowship.



FAMILY CAMPOUTS IN THE PECOS

1975 - 1983

We celebrated the first twenty-five years and moved on. They were very significant and happy years at St. John's. We consecrated a new building and rededicated ourselves.

In May 1983 at annual conference, Dr. Stewart retired then to become Pastor Emeritus of St. John's. Dr. Stewart shares his St. John's ministry memories:

DR. M. BUREN STEWART
SR. PASTOR ST. JOHN'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
1974-1983

At Annual Conference in 1974 I was appointed Sr. Pastor of St. John's. The following year in 1975 we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the church. I appreciated the opportunity as I had been present at the Groundbreaking 25 years earlier. All the former pastors and spouses were present except Rev. James Stewart, the founding pastor, who had passed away in 1974. However, his widow attended. Also all the former District Superintendents except one were present. Bishop and Mrs. Alsie Carleton attended the Saturday evening banquet and the Sunday afternoon festivities. Bishop Carleton and former pastors conducted the two Sunday morning services. In the afternoon there was a time of fellowship and visiting with former pastors and district superintendents. This was a great time of celebration.

About one year before we came to St. John's the congregation under the leadership of Dr. Whitwam had purchased a very nice parsonage on Gen. Chenault St., and Rev. Price and his wife Katherine moved into the house on Apache. When we came there were three separate buildings, Cole Hall - the first building erected and named for one of the founders - was being used as a fellowship hall. The interim sanctuary had been divided into rooms and was being used along with the entire basement for Sunday School. The third and newest building was the sanctuary, a lovely structure. The pastor's office was just inside the east entrance where the ushers room is now and would hold three people if one entered first and sat behind the desk. The administrative secretary's desk (Rosemary Rogers) was in the hallway just outside the rest rooms. In spite of this she gave excellent service. The other members of the staff when I came were Rev. Charles E. Price, excellent minister, full time assistant, a full time janitor and full time education assistant Margaret Snell. We had a part time bookkeeper Betty Christiansen, a part time choir director and part time organist Bob Lloyd who was excellent. After Betty Christiansen resigned, we had Judy Bodo and then Judy Easterling as bookkeepers.

The only paving was a sidewalk on the east side of the sanctuary running all the way to Cole Hall. Immediately to the east of the sidewalk was a small drainage ditch. You can imagine what happened when it rained, snowed or the wind blew.

The Administrative Board voted to erect a lighted cross on the tower, buy cushions for the pews, lay new carpet down the center isle and chancel area, and buy a new electronic \$25,000 organ. All these things were done before the 25th Anniversary Celebration except the organ purchase.

The Administrative Board also voted to invite Dr. Lyle Schaller, noted church consultant, to study our church and make recommendations. As a result the church made a number of improvements. The drainage ditch was removed and the entire east parking lot paved. The back of the lot was landscaped and due to the generosity of a layman a \$5,000 sprinkler system was installed. An outdoor recreation area with barbecue pit was built adjoining Cole Hall and what is now Fellowship Hall. New playground equipment was purchased.

In the meantime we employed Dr. Richard Davey, retired minister and former District Superintendent from the New York Conference (41 years service) as part time Minister of Visitation. He also assisted in the services and he and his wife Susan, who taught a

kindergarten class, gave us invaluable service for almost six years. We employed Sherry Brown Lee, a graduate of Methodist Theology School, Columbus, Ohio, as Education Director to replace Margaret Snell who had resigned to return to school. Sherry later became a Diaconal Minister. We employed a full time Music Director and full time Youth Director. Another generous person had given some money to purchase bells so a Bell Choir was organized. We had good adult, youth and children's choirs. Also we had a good UMYF and very active United Methodist Women with five circles. We sponsored scouts, AA, Alanon and many other activities. The church was busy six nights per week. We began a "live" radio broadcast of our second Sunday morning service.

Rev. Price lost his wife Katherine in 1977. On a Sunday morning in 1979 Dr. Davey and I had the privilege of uniting him and Jan Putnam in marriage with the entire attendance at the second service as witnesses.

To give the choirs a vacation and the congregation a change of pace we instigated "Worship - Camp Meeting Style" every August. It was an informal service with a volunteer choir from the gathered congregation and special folk music with guitars etc. This later grew into the Blue Grass Group. Under the direction of Tom Neal, our adult choir was invited to sing for Annual Conference.

The Charge Conference, after much study and discussion, voted to build an Education Building, parlor, church offices and rest rooms, tying the three buildings together into one structure. The architect received a commendation. Construction was started in 1979. The partitions were removed from the interim sanctuary and it was made into a fellowship hall. A small elevator shaft was left for an elevator from the first to the second floor, but the elevator was not installed until Leonard Gillingham became pastor. A new entrance to the sanctuary was constructed on the west and also a handicapped ramp. The west parking lot was paved and landscaping done. The address was changed from 2633 California St. to 2626 Arizona St., a deck was constructed by Boyd Stephens on the east side of the new parlor. The entire project cost a little less than one million dollars.

During the construction my wife Gladys and I took two weeks to attend Bethel Bible Instructor's Classes in Madison, Wisconsin. When we returned we recruited 25 dedicated people who would commit themselves to a two hour class once each week for two years and then teach the congregational phase. The class was difficult as Gladys and I taught the class as a graduate course. This deepened the spiritual life of St. John's and much of the teaching can be observed in the new stained glass windows which were installed when the sanctuary was remodeled during Dr. Norman Grigsby's ministry. Some Bethel classes are still being taught on Sunday morning.

We are proud of the people we recommended for full time Christian Service during our tenure. They are the Rev. David Snyman, pastor of Paradise Hills UMC, Albuquerque, the Rev. Dr. Nancy Bowen, daughter of Galt and Doris Bowen, E. Stanley Jones Professor of Theology at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, and Paul Mathis who served at Wesley Alamogordo, Tularosa and Cloudcroft before returning to the business world. Lyle Reece, who was recommended during Dr. Grigsby's ministry, is serving as Asst. at Central Albuquerque. Earlier Robert Fisher, son of Charlene Malfer, was recommended by our Charge Conference and has been serving for several years in Texas. Larry Daniel, son of Nancy and Tommy Daniel, joined our church and later began considering the ministry. His father, Tommy, accepted a position as church administrator with Central United Methodist Church here. Later Larry was recommended by Central Charge Conference. After serving pastorates in New Mexico and Northwest Texas he accepted a position as Supervising Chaplain of the support ministries for South Georgia Hospice. His father, Tommy, became a Diaconal Minister and served several years as church administrator, retiring recently in Temple, Texas.

Others who came from families within the church but were recommended by other Charge Conferences or official bodies were Dean and Russel Posey, sons of R.L. and Patty Posey. Dean is serving as a United Methodist Church Minister in Texas and Russell as a Baptist Missionary in Fairbanks, Alaska. Also Will Steinsiek, son of Col. Clyde and Wilma Steinsiek, served several years in our conference before entering the business world. This is a great record for fifty years to say nothing of the influence the church has had in the lives of people known only to God.

When we came to St. John's the budget was \$152,000 plus. When we retired in 1983, nine years later, it was a little more than \$415,000. All the apportionments were paid every year. The records show that 1394 members were received into the church during that time.

Any progress made during our pastorate was due to the great people of St. John's and the hard work of our predecessors. Gladys and I are proud to have been a part of this fine fellowship.

Only eternity will reveal the good accomplished by St. John's United Methodist Church but my prayer is that the first fifty years will be only a prelude to greater accomplishments in the future.

Music Directors 1974-1983:

Jim Simpson - adult choir
Gary Huddleston - children, youth and adult choirs
Jack Nuzum - children's choir (volunteer)
Ted Lorts - youth choir and youth director
Tom Neill - youth and adult choirs
Marjorie Pearson - youth director
Geri Ewing - adult choir director
John Avery - adult choir and youth choir

Due to the generosity of one of our members, bells were added to our music program. Over the years the ringers have been jokingly referred to as the "ding-a-lings". The adult, "Celebration Ringers", and the youth, "Joyful Praise", bell choirs have enriched the music ministry of St. John's.

The summer of 1983 a "tall Texan", as Dr. Grigsby jokingly proclaimed, came to St. John's. He was tall enough to remove the coke case used by his predecessor from behind the pulpit and still see over it - thus the tall Texan. Norman brought his sack full of bunnies, chief bunny was Aquila, and gave the children gathered around the sermon in a sack while they cuddled his stuffed bunnies. One of his characteristic expressions was "I have become convinced". He talked about homogeneous groupings and the unchurched. Music was an important part of his vision for worship. Norman often used illustrations in his sermons from his growing up years in west Texas and told stories about his dogs. This man even told us he named his alarm clock - Jerry. Norman preached sermons about God's plan for our lives and about our need to give. He was an excellent teacher and conducted Real Divorce, Real Recovery workshops throughout his ministry with us.

Jonathan Foster was appointed as Associate Pastor in 1985 and stayed until June of 1987. Scott Penrod was then appointed for one year as Associate.

REV. JONATHAN H. FOSTER
Associate Pastor
1985—1987

"Bloom Where You Are Planted."

Having served the Bayard United Methodist Church for four and one half years, Bishop Schowengerdt appointed me as the Associate Pastor under Dr. Norman Grigsby in June 1985. The appointment was to be for two years. I arrived at St. John's United Methodist Church during the remodeling of the sanctuary. Building design, congregational support and funding were the dominating parish concerns during this time. The remodeled sanctuary would be completed during these two years with St. John's receiving special recognition from the New Mexico Business Journal.

As the associate pastor, my primary tasks were: 1) Initiate a single adult ministry, 2) Assist Dr. Grigsby and Rev. Charlie Price in visitation and 3) Assist with the Bethel Bible Study Series. PLUS Ones (Positive Living Urban Singles) was started in the summer of 1985 and was a successful ministry to middle aged singles from all walks and experiences of life. Average attendance was 20 at weekly meetings. Retreats and special activities completed special programming and ministries. Ms. Kay Worth worked wonderfully with the Prime Time Singles, which had previously been organized. A Sunday school class for the college and career aged students was started and met in the basement.

Pastoral contact was split between Monday afternoons and evenings with visitors from the previous worship services. Friday was designated hospital visitation and ministry to shut-ins. Dr. Grigsby designed an affective program of visitation and membership contact.

In October 1985, I was trained as a Bethel Bible Series teacher in Madison, Wisconsin and taught one class. This was a most rewarding time.

In June of 1987, I would be appointed to the Carlsbad/Loving Charge in southeastern New Mexico.

Much was learned from Dr. Grigsby and working with Rev. Price will always be fondly remembered. I will always be indebted to the staff and secretaries at St. John's UMC for their hard work and support. They are still to be commended.

The more memorable events during my two years include: the times spent with the children during worship, the baptism of our son Christopher by Bishop Louis Schowengerdt, the many wonderful moments spent with those involved in the singles' programs, the strong friendships created from the Bethel Class and experiencing the "charm" of Jan and Charlie Price. I have always appreciated Dr. Grigsby's "positive" approach to ministry and for having introduced me to the ministry and work of Dr. Robert Schuller. These have served me well over the years.

I am proud to have been on staff during this time and am blessed to be a member of the church family called St. John's United Methodist Church.

Grace and Peace,



Jon Foster

In 1986 Stan Sager was appointed Building Committee chairperson for the renovation of the sanctuary. With less than unanimous agreement we moved into the renovation and for seven weeks we held worship from the deck while the congregation was seated under the large shade trees between buildings. This proved a positive experience as the weather cooperated and we averaged 500 in attendance. The art glass windows in the sanctuary were designed by Dr. Judy Williamson and donated by individuals and families outside of the renovation budget. Scenes from the Old Testament are on one side with New Testament on the other all tied together by the overall theme of "I am the vine, you are the branches". The colorful and symbolic rose window became the focal point of our sanctuary.

The original granite altar was dismantled and stored for a time as it was too heavy to be versatile in the raised chancel area. Von Dell Grigsby activated the Altar Guild which worked with lots of TLC on the aesthetics of the church, decorating for the liturgical seasons and making banners. Von Dell and the Altar Guild realized a dream to beautify the west entry by raising money to reassemble the granite altar in that area. In Von Dell's words, "It gives a worshipful look to the many who step inside."

After Norman attended the training course in 1987, he began the Disciple Bible Study at St. John's, a continued emphasis for adult education in 2000. The Chenault and Apache parsonages were sold and the funds invested as part of the St. John's Foundation.

Sherry Lee Brunner, Director of Education, left in 1986 for a position at St. Paul's in El Paso. Sherry's ministry at St. John's included many innovations in program that have become traditional. Sherry never wanted anyone to feel lost so she put a sign on everything.

Lots of members spent lots of time in developing a mission statement for St. John's. The aim was for this mission statement to become the instrument to lead our congregation to a "long-range plan and action ministries for the remainder of the century". The statement adopted was "Gathered to Grow, Sent out to Sow" - perhaps more of a slogan, but it worked for us at that time and continues to be our only "official" mission statement.

Family and friendliness have been emphasis at St. John. Lola Eagle Schultz shares about what friendliness has meant in her life at St. John's, "I never was much of a 'hugger'. My character was much more reserved. My new friends at St. John's were great for hugging and the warmth of this personal touch made me grow into a much warmer person. They are my hugging angels." Lola, a writer, expresses herself further in this poem:

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S
- Lola R. Eagle

Easter morn of '85
Sunrise Service - He is Alive!
We came to pray, then stayed to eat
And broke our fast with cakes and meat.
Norman came to sit with us
Shook our hands and welcomed us.
We liked his style; we liked his jokes
Our hearts were warmed by friendly folks.
Our visit then was all it took;
Decision made with just one look.
This was our church from that time on,
All because of Easter dawn.

Susie Hinkle Easterling shares in a poem about the role St. John's has played in the life of her family:

**There are many life changing events
That mold a family's life.
Events that make a couple
More than just man and wife.**

**In the case of the Hinkles,
There was a special day.
It was the day we joined St. John's
And we were able to say:**

**"We agree to support this church
With our presence, service, gifts and prayer,"
And we were honored to join other Christians
Who, in return, promised to sustain us with their care.**

**The four Hinkle children
Were high energy filled.
Life was never dull
And their parents were continually thrilled**

**To watch as they matured
And grew in so many ways.
They were truly gifts from God
And we were honored to share their days.**

**St. John's was a place for them to grow
In their Faith and the Truth in the Word.
Sunday School, UMYF, music and sports
Allowed the Message to be heard.**

**Christians are to serve as well as be served.
That is part of God's plan.
St. John's provided our family with ways
To help our fellow man.**

**We could not possibly have known
What future events were to be,
But without the love of this fellowship
We would have felt lost and lonely.**

**Whether it was the sadness of an illness
Or the joy of confirmation, wedding, or baptism,
St. John's members provided the support,
And its spiritual leaders provided the wisdom**

**Reminding us that our church family would be there
To share its unconditional love.
The Hinkles will forever be grateful
'Cause St. John's was a gift from above.**

**—Manny Hinkle (deceased—3/19/97) Susie Hinkle Easterling—
Jeff Hinkle, Matt Hinkle, Mandi Hinkle Venable, Heidi Hinkle White**

St. John's UMC
1983-1993
A Pastor's Perceptions
By Norman W. Grigsby

In June, 1983, Von Dell and I moved into the parsonage on General Chennault. I was installed as the seventh Senior Pastor and began a decade of very hard work. Our success was rather limited, but I feel the church made some progress during that era.

1. We received a lot of new members. Many of them became leaders in the congregation. Many of them are still active leaders of the church.
2. We improved our financial base. For years the church had received about the same number of dollars each year during an era of double-digit inflation. That meant the church's purchasing power was decreasing. A larger portion of the church's income was being channeled to service debt at high interest rates. A strong stewardship emphasis was a necessity.
3. We established the St. John's Foundation Fund.
4. We updated the interior of the Sanctuary. That project changed the aesthetics and considerably improved the acoustics. The Chancel area was made much more portable. That allowed for a variety of formats for worship, drama and musical presentations. We were able to begin hosting the Chamber Orchestra of New Mexico and gained a lot of name and location identification in the city. The stained glass art picture windows were added during this project. The remodel project gained the architects the award for Best Interior Design in the State for 1985.
5. The concept of staffing changed considerably during the era. My first Sunday, five teenagers made up the youth choir in the early worship hour. We had a part-time Music Director. I have a strong conviction that worship attendance will not improve much in a main line denomination church without excellent music. That music will not be excellent until a full time person with training in music ministry is employed to lead the program. We improved the quality and numbers of the youth program by employing excellent youth directors who recruited and trained willing adults. We emphasized this was ministry to families with youth. We added a Director of Ministries to Families with Children. In 1983 the children's ministry consisted of Sunday School classes, a "Mothers' Day Out" program, Vacation Bible School and some special days. The full-blown ministry began during our decade.
6. We began changing the Sunday morning schedule. In 1983, we had back to back simultaneous worship and Sunday School for children. I felt we could never involve large numbers of adults in educational/fellowship groups as long as we only had worship and Sunday School twice at the same time. I felt the ideal would be to have three worship hours and three Sunday School hours, but we did not have the music to

lead three worship hours. We devoted the Mid-morning hour to Sunday School. During our decade, St. John's became the number one attendance church in Sunday School and Worship in the New Mexico Conference. A part of that could be attributed to the decline of other churches, but at least St. John's went against the trend.

7. We changed our business procedures. We began using updated equipment and procedures and added a church administrator. We also changed the method of financing our debt service.
8. I believe the self-image of St. John's Church changed during the decade. We became aware that we were a large church and that largeness was an advantage. We began to feel more comfortable with our diversity. New people came to be seen as assets rather than threats.

I would be remiss if I did not make mention of the dedication and commitment of Dr. Richard Gooding, Stan Sager, Jim Stretz, Karen Janes, Al Barickman, and Dale Amend. They led dozens of others in making good decisions for the church and have helped it stay the course. Others could be named.

Any church with Charlie Price will have good pastoral care. Jim Kelly, Marc Davidson, Dara Shipp, Judy Williamson and Sue Stanley helped to make my dreams become a reality. They are to be thanked and loved.

St. John's church continues to do well. I am so proud of you.

Norman W. Grigsby

We were reading Notes from Norman, Chatting with Charlie, Gems from Jim and Scott's Sketches in the Disciple. The Jolly Elders advertised the program for the month would be "Bad Ladies of Jazz". During this time the Society of St. Stephen was begun as an adjunct to the Church and Society Work Area and began many community outreach programs that have endured.

Judy Easterling was honored for ten years of service as bookkeeper. We were mentioned in the New York Times because the Chamber Orchestra of Albuquerque held their performances at St. John's.

We collected everything from Campbell Soup labels to old eyeglasses. We supported all sorts of outreach projects along with missionaries. In fact we began to get lots of flack for cluttering up the narthex with collections and projects. We had a coed basketball team in the church league and have trophies to show for it. The Hanging of the Greens was initiated. The youth took the musical "Surrender" on the road and a legend, "Cherry Tree Carol", was presented as a drama by the choirs, ensemble, and dancers.

We were really perking along in 1989 and then we did the unthinkable - terminated the choir director. This set off a series of painful events that divided a large part of the congregation as we chose up sides and assaulted one another verbally and aired old hurts. There was disillusionment, bewilderment, and bitterness causing pain to families and among friends and to our pastor. Some valued members left over this squabble. The experience is a part of who we are. In our decision making today we often remind ourselves not to repeat our mistakes. With the faithfulness and the grace of God in dealing with us we realized our blessings and moved on to work at being a blessing.

We purchased numerous copies of the first United Methodist Hymnal replacing the old Methodist Hymnals. There were financial difficulties, but we did agree to co-sign a \$150,000 loan with Mesa View UMC on the west side. We decided to scratch the 1990 Capital Stewardship Program with its goal of one million dollars. Fund-raisers like pancake breakfasts enabled us to pay apportionments.

Music has played an inspiring role for St. John's. A new choir director was hired, Sue Stanley, full of enthusiasm and with training and dedication to sacred music.

Music is another of those areas that will require a whole chapter when the 100 year history of St. John's is written. Here is part of long time choir member, Donna Eaton's, recollections:

Early volunteer directors were Jim Shreve and Roger Haines. The Chancel Choir follows the instructions of John Wesley as printed in The United Methodist Hymnal and members are dedicated to regular weekday practice sessions and singing in regular and special worship services besides presentations of musical works.

Lucile Danek was the first non-volunteer choir director. Donna recalls that she and Roger felt instantly a part of the congregation through singing with a folk group led by Mrs. Danek. In the mid-sixties George Collaer served as choir director and organist. He sat at the organ directly in front of the choir. He could play an anthem with his feet and one hand, while directing the choir with his other hand and his bouncing eyebrows. Marilyn Humphreys followed and her notion was that "anyone can learn to sing". Robert Loyd became organist in 1969 and continued until about 1985. Next director was Gary Huddleston, a gifted pianist. Some will remember the beautiful anthems sung by Gary and his wife. Kathryn Price directed the children's choirs. Under Jim Simpson the choir memorized and presented the musical, "Celebrate Life". He also added a lot of spirituals to the music collection.

Tom Neill, an Irish tenor, became director and gave the choir an opportunity to sing Latin Masses with accompaniment by string chamber groups. He was part-time director for about four years and was followed by Geri Ewing. Geri, a high school music teacher, was part Hawaiian and watching her graceful hands in directing the choirs was a delight to the congregation and the choir. When Geri moved away, John Avery became part-time director of the Chancel and Youth choirs.

In 1983, Pat Robinson was hired as our first full-time music director. Beverly Sturgess was our organist. Pat was an artist and a comedian as well. The choir grew in size and capabilities under his direction and performed "Acts" among other musical productions. He formed several small groups, such as a Men's Quartet and some orchestra ensembles.

In 1990, when Pat returned to school music, a series of short-term part-time directors and volunteers led the choir until David Kates, an intern, was hired to direct both the Chancel and Youth choirs.

Sue Stanley joined the staff as Director of Music Ministries and under her leadership, some seventeen groups and choirs were developed. Sue had an amazing talent for working with any age group and bringing them into their own "personal best". She introduced the music of Ken Medema to the church. Meribeth Gunning, an exceptional organist, worked with Sue and the music program flourished. The Sonrise Choir led the early worship service with dignity and pride. Sue, also, introduced the Madrigal Dinners. When she left to pursue a teaching career, Jack Nuzum, a choir member, stepped up to become part-time choir director for about six months.

Jose Daniel Flores came to the states from Puerto Rico to be full-time director of Music Ministries. He is an accomplished pianist and organist and talented musician in every respect. Randy Cawfield has recently become assistant director, part-time. The Chancel Choir has continued to grow steadily and improve over the nearly fifty years of its existence, due to the faithfulness of its members and competence of its directors.

Many talented people contribute their abilities and time to help make music an integral part of ministry through St. John's. Over the years through participation in the music programs, members have experienced spiritual growth and enjoyed great fellowship.

Between 1991 and 1993 we floated bonds which helped us see the future date when we would be free of our old debt.

In 1991 Charlie Price retired from full time ministry only to continue on staff in a different role. Marc Davidson, Youth Minister, resigned leaving our UMYF kids devastated but they recovered. Marc is another of those staff people at St. John's that has left a positive and ongoing mark on our ministries. Marc truly wanted to minister to youth specifically and this he did extremely well. Dara Shipp was hired upon his resignation and with her loving attention and concern for youth, UMYF continued to grow and meet the spiritual needs of our youth.

To tell of the MYF and UMYF would take a book unto itself - too many memories dating from that early time when seven girls were the Youth Group to our present bunch. Many fine part-time and full time youth directors and sponsors have made an impact on the lives and spiritual growth of our youth. These impressions and experiences are preserved in the lives of many adult Christians. Young adult UMYF alumni get together during college breaks and Steve Eagan remembers an MYF reunion for the seniors from 1969.



UMYF KIDS

Sarah Nuzum Painter shares some of her wonderful childhood memories of growing up at St. John's culminating in her wedding at St. John's in 1995. Sarah wrote, "High School is a tough time as most everyone can recall, but thanks to UMYF, every Sunday evening I knew I had a group of friends who believed as I did and who supported me, teased me, and laughed with me. Some of those people are still my very best friends and always will be." She expressed thanks to everyone at St. John's who touched her life and helped give her the solid Christian base that her life is based upon today, and said further, "I especially want to thank God for giving me such a wonderful place to learn about His abundant love and grace."

We speak of remembered camps, camping out, lock-ins, retreats, dances, Bible Study, and all those experiences that make UMYF so special in the lives of our youth.. Like trips in the bright blue bus - escapades where somehow the boy's shorts got starched, getting "green sick" on bus tours, TP'ing of the pastor's house and who knows what all! Service projects, Music and Ministry trips, YO, Sunrise Choir, Youth Sundays, the Youth Lounge. Of course MYF koolaid (often just colored water when too many show up) has been a part of these experiences and will likely continue to be especially if the coke machine breaks down.

Christian Youth and Choir Retreat
November 7-8, 1981
Ghost Ranch
A GIFT OF LOVE

A group of 55 youth and 13 adults spent a weekend experiencing God's love through a variety of activities. The retreat was organized by Marjorie Pearson, Youth Director, with music leadership provided by Jerri Ewing, Choir Director. The retreat included small and large group discussions and activities, intensive choir practice, a gift of love from Jesus and good fun!

And indeed it was a fun weekend of fellowship and singing and a time of sharing God's love. Four talks were given by adults and youth: God's Love and Gifts (Grace), God Calls Us to Worship in Love (Faith), Obstacles to Responding to God's love (sin) and What's This New Life All About?

A group of clowns were on hand to play the role of "Christ the Servant". Their presence was felt as they helped in the activities and also left gifts on the beds of the youth during the weekend.

The adult leaders spent time with their small group...some being more creative than others with "group time"! These leaders were Mannie and Susie Hinkle, Loren and Anita Keller, Gene Arnot, Myra Van Gundy, and Jim and Kay Collins. Mannie was the most creative with his group of boys during an afternoon rainstorm...he refereed a pillow fight with his boys in their room. Jim decided that was a good activity...and chose to follow his example. The rest of us tried to be more responsible in our choice of activities, but found they had the most fun of all!

Youth retreats at St. John's...whether at Sacramento, Ghost Ranch, Pinon Canyon, or wherever...are always lasting memories for youth and adults alike and truly do provide those "mountain top" experiences in our faith journeys.

- Kay Collins

In 1993 Rosemary Rogers, almost an institution unto herself, was honored in her retirement. She had served the church under all but the first of our pastors. Staffing requirements and positions were evaluated by the SPRC in order to address the ministry needs of a large church. Dr. Grigsby sent a group to California to a Lay Ministry workshop in hopes of enhancing the role of the laity.

Jim Kelly, was added to staff to handle business procedures - left for a "spell", returned and continues to ably keep the facility running and our budget on track. His methodical, informed efficiency has been invaluable. His characteristic office "neatness" is admired if not always duplicated around the church.

St. John's membership could scarcely believe that we were so fortunate as to have "Dr. Judy" Williamson added to staff as Director of Ministries to Families with Children. Judy's title changed over the years and she smilingly accepted lots of new responsibilities with grace and creativity. She was wonderful at recruiting and training adults to work with children. Judy had an understanding and rapport with all of the "young Christians" who benefited from her knowledge and love. Under her guidance the Pre-School Plus became a mission of St. John's. Who could forget her entertaining articles in the Disciple and her art work that adorned so many of our brochures and notices.

JUDY'S MEMORABLE MOMENTS

"My most memorable moments while being a member of St. John's UMC were the following: the baptism by Dr. Buren Stewart and Rev. Charles Price of our much prayed for four pound premature daughter, Jillian Ruth Williamson, in the fall of 1975; answers to questions my children asked given by Director of Education, Sherry Lee Bruner and Dr. Buren Stewart; the confirmations of my children Walton Ross and Jillian under the direction of Youth Director Marc Davidson and Kay Collins; the installation of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary of St. John's; the Baccalaureate Services for my children under the direction of Youth Director Dara Shipp; witnessing the amazing positive results for people listed and prayed for on our prayer board initiated by Dr. Leonard Gillingham and the prayer board's affect on children who checked the names each time they came to church; witnessing and strong evangelistic success of many children who personally made certain that their parents, grandparents, their brothers, sisters, cousins and all their friends knew Jesus; the Children's Sermon times and the special children and families worship times (Children's Sabbath, Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Pretzel Day...what a special pleasure it was to work with Jose Daniel Flores and Maribeth Gunning to create the perfect musical atmosphere for these events) during the leadership of Dr. Norman Grigsby, Dr. Leonard Gillingham, and Rev. Jim Hawk; the national accreditation of Preschool Plus; the expansion of Preschool Plus to a second site in keeping with The Great Commission to go into all the world and tell the good news of God's Love to all children; daily association with so many outstanding and capable Children's Ministries staff people; and the gracious time of good-byes given by the church during July of 1999."

Dr. Grigsby retired at Annual Conference 1993. He wrote in the Disciple, "Things will be different in the future. That is the way it should be."

On June 1, 1993, Dr. E. Leonard Gillingham, a truly tall, "sorta" lanky fellow from Oklahoma, more recently from St. Paul's UMC in Las Cruces, became our senior pastor. Leonard came to St. John's full of energy and enthusiasm and love. He was very pastoral. He stayed so busy that SPRC had to caution him to take it easier. Both Martha and Leonard

were enthusiastic supporters of the Emmaus Walk Spiritual Weekends. During their years the number having attended a "Walk" from St. John's grew to more than 90.

Martha Gillingham led the Disciple Bible Study series, herself teaching and recruiting teachers and participants. Martha writes: "My memories of St. John's are very fresh and very diverse: youth-led worship and choir programs; adult Sunday school classes; Children's Sabbaths with the puppets; pot luck dinners with the Jolly Elders; UMW studies and days apart; inspiring worship on Sunday morning and special occasions. There were some tough times, too. The common thread in all my memories is the loving caring people, always conscious of living their Christian faith in genuine authentic ways. I am grateful to God for those years among you, and cherish the memories of those full and joyous years and the warm friendships that continue."

Church growth during 1993 was measured at 9%. The Council on Ministries became more active under the leadership of Les Bruce and developed both vision and mission statements to use as guidelines.

The summer of 1994 saw the youth on a Music and Mission (M & M) trip for ten days. They did various service projects on the road including conducting vacation church school in Estancia, N.M. They stopped by the Grand Canyon on their way back from visits to other churches in Arizona. The congregation came to look forward to the fine dinners put on as fund-raisers for these trips.

On Thanksgiving 1994 Astronaut Susan Helms, one of our members, returned St. John's American Flag which she had carried with her on a space mission. Upon receiving this flag Dr. Gillingham said, "Thank you Col. Helms. I'm sure you returned this with Heaven's Blessing! Right?"

Dori Helms tells about the St. John's connection to the Air Force Academy: In 1976 the United States Military Academies opened their doors to women. The first class of 92 females to graduate from the Air Force Academy in 1980 included three members of the congregation of St. John's UMC - Marianne Owens, Anne Martin and Susan Helms. Marianne, a lawyer, is now a Lt. Col. Air Force Judge Advocate stationed at Ramstein AFB, Germany. Anne was one of the first Air Force female pilots and flew a C-141 prior to her leaving the service. Susan, an astronaut, (AF Col./Mission Specialist) has flown four shuttle missions and is training to be a member of the second expedition three-person crew to inhabit the International Space Station. Bob and Donnie Martin and Pat and Dori Helms (proud parents) are current members of the congregation.

After a lengthy consultation process it was decided to change Sunday morning worship hours to 8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. in order to better accommodate the time period in between for transition to and from church school classes. This meant that Sunrise Choir kids had to be at church very early - they did it without a blink attesting to their devotion and pride in their part in leading worship. Later a third worship service with a more "contemporary" style was begun at 9:30 with Selah, a choir of younger adults, leading. We called a lot of folks to invite them to St. John's using "The Phone Is For You" program.

St. John's participation in the Asbury Pie Cafe ministry began in 1994. St. John's provides about 600 pies and fills 125 worker shifts at the Cafe which operates every September at the NM State Fair. All proceeds from this popular activity goes to local mission organizations. This project has been ably led by Doris Bowen, who is presently the church treasurer. The Pie Cafe is but one among the many and varied services that she has performed at St. John's since the early fifties. Doris does good work and exemplifies "good works".

In 1964 St. John's took on a new role as a teaching church. Dwight Broedel, an intern from Perkins School of Theology at SMU, joined the staff. After his ordination as a deacon and later as elder, he was appointed Associate Pastor. Dwight did more than enjoy eating at St. John's, although he did his part at Jolly Elder potlucks and every other chance he got. His youthful outlook and pleasant manner endeared him to the congregation. Dwight was instrumental in establishing Bethesda, a group interested in assuring that our facility be user friendly to those with handicapping conditions. Great spiritual moments were experienced in the Good Friday worship programs that he led.

Chaplain Dwight Broedel writes of his time at St. John's.

Food. Eating would appear to be the central theme in most of our St. John's memories. Truly a United Methodist tradition worthy of our praise is the love of pot-luck suppers, pre-dawn breakfast meetings, and soup, salad, and Administrative Council meeting! Do you remember eating at the Charge Conference? I believe we had a great time munching through reports. The Tuesday morning men's group is a definite highlight. Charlie Price moderating the ever vigorous theological debate. There is nothing quite like eating doughnuts, drinking Lubin's famous high-octane coffee, and discussing the finer points of Christian doctrine juxtaposed by socio-political consequences.

Wednesday afternoons with Harley and the kids were another highpoint. Getting tossed out of my office by a group of teenage girls watching the love scene in Titanic was memorable; actually, listening to them giggle and blush. A similar memory is of watching the shadows dance on the faces of the youth gathered around a work-camp bond fire. Shadows of doubt, curiosity, and suspicion, as I told the story of the Blue Light Ghost that lives in the church's basement. If you haven't heard the story ask Leonard, he can confirm the ghost in the basement.

Holy Week was always a high point. The dramas we put on telling the story of those final hours of Christ's life meant a great deal to us. And yes, food is part of each of these memory-stories. Even at Annual Conference there is food. We Methodists love to eat!

Grace and Peace to you from Chaplain Dwight and Mrs. Cindy Broedel, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

By 1995 St. John's involvement and support of missions and missionaries qualified us as a Global Mission Partner church. This was a proud moment and we have been able to continue in this status. The able and unassuming leadership of Frances Scialla, long time chairperson of Missions, is responsible for this accomplishment. Remember all those cows, pigs, and chickens - the Heifer Project. Fran's bulletin boards are always colorful and thought provoking.

The Bluegrass Band began entertaining us in 1995. Roger Eaton gives the history of this group:

The St. John's Blue Grass Ensemble has been an active singing/playing group, performing for over five years. They perform at church services, weddings, funerals, birthdays, banquets, Broadway shows, ground breakings, and various other gatherings. The group got its start at the suggestions of Sue Stanley, Rob and Judy Easterling, and the Brays. Pat and Richard Bray had considerable experience singing blue grass when they joined St. John's in 1995. The Easterlings had enjoyed listening to blue grass in the church setting, when

they lived in the Washington D.C. area, and Sue Stanley reasoned that some good lively music in the church services couldn't hurt (much).

The history of the use of fretted string instruments at St. John's goes back to the mid-sixties. Some of the early participants were Ron Day, May Kay Day, Daton Hill, and Roger Eaton. Their folk group, the Hillarys, frequently sang at the church for over five years.

St. John's Blue Grass Ensemble sang for the first time at the "St. John's Goes Broadway" production in 1995 with Richard Bray, Pat Helms and Roger Eaton participating. At the second "Broadway" production, the group sang again, with the addition of Pat Bray.

Popular folk songs of the sixties, as well as the good old rousing hymns from the early



1900's, plus newer gospel songs are sung by the group. People's favorites are songs such as, "On the Wings of a Dove," "O, Victory in Jesus," "Precious Memories," and "Amazing Grace." These songs get a bluegrass flavor from the fast-paced guitar pickin' (sometimes 4 or 5 guitars), with addition of string bass and banjo.

Average weekly attendance at worship increased and Sunday School average attendance was 496. We had 1706 full time members on the rolls.

Dr. Gillingham speaking at Charge Conference said, "Our organization system creates some confusion and difficulty." The Committee on Nominations and Personnel began a process of studying job descriptions for volunteer positions with an aim to get more of St. John's members involved in ministry and community and not so much management and the accompanying committee meetings. This task proved a challenge and it took several years of revising and evaluating to find the most workable system. Another project was to get St. John's computerized - a really

daunting challenge which continues even in 2000.

The major music event in 1995 was the visit by evangelistic musician, Ken Medema. Chancel Choir had grown in number to 90 members and Sonrise Choir to 60 under the direction of Sue Stanley. Jill Aubrey directed the St. John's Goes Broadway productions which were just for fun and raised funds, too. One year some of the guys really got into their rolls - performed in drag.

Also, in 1995 twenty-three mid-school aged youth completed confirmation training and became full members. Confirmation classes have been an integral part of St. John's since the 1950's when one member remembered taking classes in the kitchen of the first building with Rev. Stewart. It is said some sat on the stove as it was crowded - Rev. Odom had a bunch in his classes, too, but they were a bit younger in those years. Kay Collins served about 17 years leading confirmation classes. Her devotion to this program has been a blessing to many a young Christian's life.

In 1996, a hard working and thorough Organ Replacement Task Force was appointed to study the status of the current organ and examine various options to either repair or replace it. The Administrative Board voted that it should be replaced - the question remained with what instrument and when.



CONFIRMATION CLASS

FIFTY YEARS OF YOUTH CONFIRMATION

The Youth Confirmation program at St. John's has evolved and changed during its 50-year history and continues to bear fruit in its goal of making disciples for Jesus Christ. The Senior Pastor assumes the responsibility for the training of our youth, but in 1977 our Program Director, Sherry Brown (Lee), developed a 7th Grade Confirmation program which continues to grow in scope and relevance for today's youth. The program created a parent class which meets on Sunday mornings concurrently with the youth class. This aspect of the program has proved to be a most important element in the success of our confirmation process, and, as long-time leader of this class, Dori Helms, says, *"I believe that Confirmation is a 'window of opportunity' in parents' lives with their children. Confirmation, when given the proper emphasis, creates dialogue with a child that can teach your basic Christian values during their time of spiritual growth."*

In 1983 Youth Director Marc Davidson took over the leadership role for Confirmation with the continued assistance of Kay Collins as co-leader. Additions were made to the curriculum adding the Methodist Journey into Faith and subsequently Follow Me. Major components of the program include the writing of each confirmand's personal creed of Christian beliefs, field trips to other churches and a synagogue, memory work, Bible study and prayer, and learning to be the church in all we say and do. Prayer partners, mentors, and volunteer activities all provide opportunities to grow in faith. An overnight retreat was added and proved to be a first-time mountain-top experience for many of our pre-teens. Individual conferences with each youth provide that extra support and encouragement so often needed. During Leonard Gillingham's pastorate, he chose to meet with each student and prepare them for their faith commitment to the church. For our year 2000 Confirmation, Senior Pastor Jim Hawk joined the Confirmation leadership team and met weekly with the class. How very blessed St. John's has been with its pastoral care and dedication to the youth of our congregation! Lay leadership has been provided by Bob and Sue Benham, Jenifer Slutz, Chris & Melissa Demas, Don & Letha Oman, Tim Nuzum, and currently by Dori & Pat Helms, Susie Easterling, and Kay & Jim Collins.

Church membership is not a casual thing! It is an act of faith, a choice of creed, a decision to let one's life be about one thing and not another...it is an affirmation that the promises of God are glorious and demanding, and they concern us. They concern us and so we make vows about them!

*Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.*

Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

Kay Collins

Charlie Price described his status as semi-retired as he continued administering the Homebound Ministries. Nina Deberry, member since 1957, writes, "Charlie is always there when I need him, funerals, wedding, operations, illness. Now in my handicapped years he comes with flowers to bless me and all my friends. Life is good. St. John's has been wonderful." Rev. Newt Whetstone, retired pastor, was serving as President of the Jolly Elders - his list of official duties such as weddings and preaching coupled with Charlie's activities do not conjure up the traditional "retired image".

As average attendance at Sunday School and worship increased, we began to feel the squeeze for space. We were contributing so much "stuff" to the Storehouse that weekly pick ups became necessary to counteract the overflow from the collection box. Support for outreach programs with such intriguing titles as Souper Bowl Sunday, Basic Baby Bundles, Warm my Fingers and Toes and many others was terrific.

Task Forces were actively working to determine needs for now and the future. Leonard reported that projected capital facilities needs at St. John's, including replacing the organ, could reach 1 to 1.5 million dollars by the year 2000.

The church began to think about that 2000 year in other ways as well. A series of Heritage Luncheons was held to honor those joining in the early years through to the 1990's. Besides enjoying nostalgia, information gleaned from these dinners was to be used in planning the 50th anniversary celebration of the founding of the church.

The addition of a Kindergarten level of instruction made the Pre-School into a nationally accredited Pre-School Plus which attracted member and non-member families. By 1997 this mission of the church devoted to early childhood education had expanded to a second off site location with 200 children enrolled in the two sites by the fall. This emphasis on children has grown through the years from a Mother's Day Out program to a Children's Day Out to our present Pre-school Plus with a highly qualified staff.

The Site Expansion Committee investigated acquiring the bowling alley property across Arizona street. The Long Range Planning Committee embarked on a study to assist the Administrative Board in planning for the future direction of the church. This was quite an extensive project and involved congregational surveys, small group study session, and included a Re-Vision program.

The Chancel Choir recorded a beautiful CD of anthems entitled "With A Voice of Singing". Proceeds helped acquire 200 replacements robes for the choirs in 1997.

The UMYF and Sunrise Choir left on another Music and Ministry trip this time to California. Fifty-three youths and ten adults did eleven days on a bus. They did an appropriately named musical called "The Ride"!

We all smiled pretty for the camera and got a new pictorial directory in 1997.

The Fit for Fifty Fund campaign enabled the Trustees to begin work on a catch-up list of repairs. We finally got a new roof and retired our leak buckets, hopefully forever. The parking lot even got resurfaced! Very exciting, too, we could now go up and down in style with the installation of an elevator which enabled better use of the second floor. Our antiquated phone system was replaced. Two new white vans emblazoned with St. John's can now take groups where we need to go.

The worship atmosphere of the sanctuary has been enhanced greatly over the years through the artistic efforts of the Altar Guild. We hold so many memories of banners, flags and

arrangements which follow the liturgical seasons. Vonnie Bray and her crew out did themselves in creation of our 50th Anniversary Banner - a work of art using the 50th Anniversary symbol created by Sue Davis and Susan Bell.

Leonard Gillingham pondered just what to write about. There was so much! Here are part of his special memories:



50TH ANNIVERSARY BANNER

In his retirement speech at the Annual Conference, Norman Grigsby said "I've been privileged to serve in the greatest Methodist Church in the Conference - St. John's UMC, Albuquerque." My experience was the same. Serving St. John's for the last six years of the millennium and of my forty-nine years in ministry was the most rewarding, exciting and fulfilling experience of my ministry! I have served many marvelous churches, but they did not have the opportunities which St. John's has. From the outset the past outstanding pastoral leadership was apparent. I could detect the great thinking and sturdy liberal spirit of Bervin Caswell, the warm passionate evangelism and Bible study of Buren Stewart, the organization, vision and planning of Norman Grigsby, and the great pastoral compassion of Charlie Price. St. John's people are warm

hearted people of faith, informed, devoted, skilled and energetic. I wanted our witness to the 280,000 people in the northeast heights to be attractive.

I have many cherished moments that include children's responses. At first the children hardly spoke to me. I was baffled until I realized that children today don't shake hands. They give "fives". Once I adopted this practice it seemed to break the ice. One Sunday morning, during Easter season, as I was walking down the aisle of the church, I noticed Matthew Amend's eyes grow very large as he saw me. He never took his eyes off me but whispered something to his mom. Later I learned he had said, "Mom, there's God!" I was a bit uncomfortable with this when the next Sunday little Matt called out as he left "Goodby God!" On another occasion he interrupted the exit line, and with those same big eyes said, "Good morning, God" before he ran back to his parents. Several weeks later some of us met in Cape Canaveral for launch of the shuttle, Columbia, with astronaut Susan Helms on board. Matt saw me there and turning those glowing, big eyes to his mom he said wonderingly, "Mom, there's God. God is everywhere"! I can tell you it is an awesome thing to be mistaken for God. After more than six months Matt finally came to understand I was not God, but a representative of God. He wanted so much to know God and I was the one person he looked to for that incarnation. Through this experience I came to realize that the people come to St. John's to see God's love and grace incarnate to them and their children; helping them and their children to know God personally. What a priceless remembrance that is to me.

One final rewarding, personal experience for me took place in the workroom when a staff member said in frustration, "If we could only get rid of sin!" "What is your plan?" I asked.

We both laughed understanding the nature of people, even the forgiven ones, to act sinfully. I pray that we will always know the joy of being part of the family of God, loving God with heart, mind, soul and strength, initiating love toward others as Christ did toward us. Thank you for these and millions of other memories together.

Signed Faithfully yours, E.Leonard Gillinham.

In 1998 Rev. Dwight Broedel and his wife, Cindy, left for Fort Hood, Texas. Dwight's ambition to serve God as an ordained minister in the Chaplain Program of the US Army was realized. Rev. Robert E. Stone, an ex-Navy Chaplain, was appointed Associate Pastor. He seemed to like St. John's right away, but even more quickly found that he really loved St. John's lay leader, Cynthia Kinsey. The church shared in their joy and wedding ceremony.

This year marked the arrival of Dr. Jose Daniel Flores as he became the Director of Music Ministries. His musical training and talent were immediately evident, but he scarcely got settled before he was off on an M & M trip with the youth. This time to Texas where besides all their service and musical activities, they got to visit Six Flags amusement park.

St. John's was involved in and supported 20 separate interest groups as part of its community interaction. 126 people days of work were put in for Habitat for Humanity. Ricky McFarland and Todd Salzwedal were recommended as candidates for Deacon in the United Methodist Church.

As usual Children's Ministries were hopping with 700 children being served each week. Missoula Children's Theater, Children's Ministries Workshop, Families' Ministries Workshop - all child and parent related - were offered. Dr. Judy Williamson describes just how meaningful Ash Wednesday became to the children:

Ash Wednesday Experience - Judy Williamson

When we began to place ashes on the foreheads of children on Ash Wednesday at Pretzel Day Worship, we had thought only a few children might want to participate. We demonstrated what would happen. We made it very clear that no one had to have ashes placed on his or her forehead. We explained that the ashes would be used to draw Jesus' cross right on their foreheads. We explained that having ashes place on a forehead was one way for people who want to be Jesus' friends to say they wanted to begin to do more things that Jesus would like for them to do. We gave an open altar call and expected a few, confident, brave children to come forward. We were overwhelmed by the rush not only of the confident children, but by all the children. Almost no child remained in the pews. It was as if the children had been waiting for someone to let them kneel before God and say they wanted to live like Jesus. They were very patient as they crushed toward the railing. The children looked at one another to see the crosses marked on their heads. Toward the last, one girl leaned way over the rail and whispered, "I really want this cross on my head, but will it ever come off?" This child was willing to have an indelible mark of a Christian put on her head for all to see forever. What a courageous and faithful little Christian! I assured her that it would wash off. She took a deep breath and smiled when the minister got to her. At the end some parents had come into the worship service and knelt with their children. It was spontaneous and very touching. An increasing number of parents began to participate as this yearly practice continued.

Dr. Gillingham retired in June of 1999. The third of our last three senior pastors to retire upon completing their ministry at St. John's. Leonard bid us farewell sporting his new bib overalls.

Jim Hawk, as he likes to be called, came to St. John's from Odessa, Texas equipped with a fine Texas accent plus a quick wit and lots of experience and credentials. Rev. Hawk is to be our lead pastor as we venture into the new century and our second fifty years. The pulpit was raised to accommodate his focal point. He likes to deliver sermons with very large visual aids and often with a Bible in his right hand.



THE WONDER OF THE CROSS

Rev Hawk shares about his call to St. John's:

In the winter of 1999 one of my colleagues in the ministry asked me if I was planning to leave First United Methodist Church in Odessa. My answer was no. He then restated the question, "Is there any church that might be offered to you that would cause you to leave Odessa?" My answer was that the only church in the conference I would want to go to was St. John's in Albuquerque.

To my surprise and delight the call came in the spring that the Bishop and cabinet had chosen me to replace Leonard Gillingham as senior pastor of St. John's.

The delight came because I was following in the footsteps of many wonderful pastors before me. They and the congregation had developed St. John's into the lead church of the New Mexico Annual Conference. St. John's led in membership, worship attendance and certainly has one of the strongest music, children and youth ministries in the conference. The staff each had so many gifts and passions being lived out in their special area of ministry. St. John's was poised to enter the new millennium and I had been chosen to lead the congregation.

Once I was over the shock I called Norman Grigsby to ask his opinion of accepting the appointment to St. John's. His response was "by all means accept!" Leonard Gillingham gave me the same advice. He could not say enough wonderful things about St. John's and how well he felt I was matched to the needs of the church. I had history with both of these former pastors and could find no better advice than that of Leonard and Norman and I said "yes" to the appointment. I have never looked back.

We are now in the new millennium and pressing forward to be the church that God has called St. John's to be. The congregation has accepted the challenge of an ambitious facilities expansion program. Members of the congregation are identifying their spiritual gifts and passions and matching them to ministry in the church. Small group ministry is being launched so that each member can find a place for growth and service in the church and community. Evangelism is becoming a priority ministry. The first budget of over one

million dollars was adopted for the year 2000. These are just a few of the positive directions of St. John's.

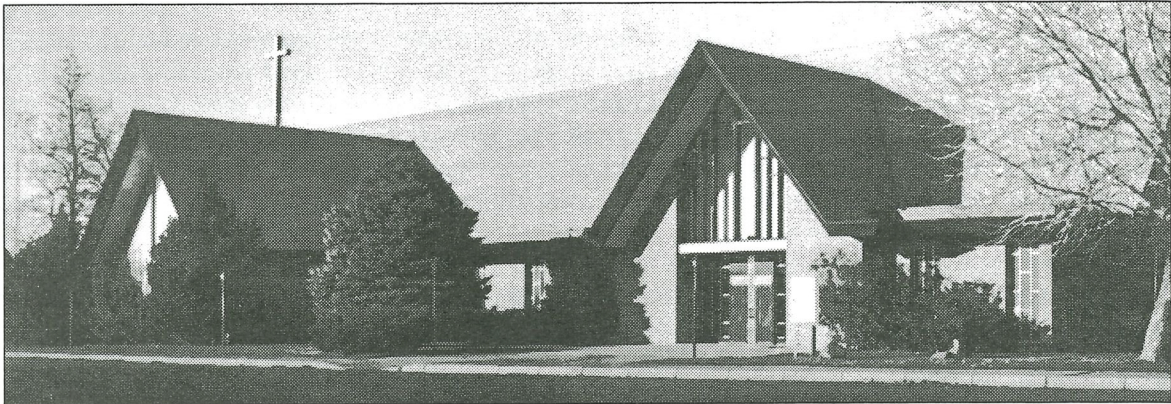
St. John's greatest asset, however, is the lay people. There are so many wonderful people in this congregation. They come from all walks and ways of life. They are not only involved in the life of this church but in the life of the Albuquerque community. They are the heart and blood of St. John's.

1999 saw other personnel changes as Scott Summerhill became Church Sexton. Shelly Boeglin became our first Volunteer Coordinator and started right in doing the Network Program to help members discover their spiritual gifts.

We added another intern from Perkins School of Theology, Julie Davis. Julie, now Rev. Davis after her ordination in 2000, jumped (or perhaps was nudged) right into the ministries of St. John's. Among other things she promotes small groups as a means of support and service in a large membership church. Her first sermon was given with the District Superintendent and the Bishop in the congregation. She was seemingly unfazed. She is now an appointed Associate Pastor. Rev. Jennifer Schooley came to be Children's Minister as "Dr. Judy" moved with her husband to Texas. We had new office staff. The crunch of office space sent the "administratives" upstairs to occupy the old resource room which had become an unwieldy depository.

A new century begins. The year 2000 has been devoted to celebrating our past fifty years of faith. This celebration will culminate in a rededication service on Christmas Eve Sunday, the anniversary of the first service held at the church site. The St. John's family has also been planning for a future that is committed to the example set by Christ. As Rev. Hawk reminded us - we are all charter members of the second fifty years.

So we honor our heritage as a witness to God's abiding love and faithfulness to His church at this particular location. There is a sense of excitement and anticipation to see where the Spirit will lead us in the next fifty years. So many memories in the making.....



To all who mourn and need comfort - to all who are weary and need rest - to all who are friendless and wish friendship - to all who pray and to all who do not, but ought - to all who sin and need a Saviour, and to whosoever will - this church opens wide the door and in the name of Jesus, the Lord, says Welcome.

From St. John's bulletin cover 1957

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.*

Psalm 127:1

*Oh magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.*

Psalm 34:3

ST. JOHN'S STORY 1950 - 2000

In 1950, a site for a church was chosen
Between the developments of Hoffman and Bel-Air.
Although the building site was disputed,
The land between these two centers was bare.

Some thought a Presbyterian Church was needed,
Others thought the west side was the best place,
But the land was given for a METHODIST church,
Donated by the Butchers, Paul and Grace.

Bishop W. Angle Smith was "appalled"
At the location that had been found,
But he performed his official duty and
On October 17, 1950, he broke ground .

The first worship was on Christmas Eve.
What a wonderful time to share
The birth of the Babe and birth of St. John's
One hundred and five people were there.

The membership began developing
A spiritually welcoming place
For others to join in celebrating
The love of God and His blessed Grace.

Growth continued to happen
Throughout the 50's decade.
Equipment was bought and installed
And plans were continually made.

The Men's Club worked at the New Mexico State Fair.
They cooked themselves into submission.
The women baked the pies
Which was the beginning of tradition.

The Women's Society held their first bazaar.
A parsonage was bought on Leah Drive.
The scouting program was begun
And St. John's began to thrive!

The 1950's were a busy time.
A vibrant place of worship was beginning to form.
Church membership was steadily growing
The people of St. John's were friendly and warm.

The 60's, the 70's, the 80's,
And the 1990's, too,
Saw the church have "ups and downs"
As such ventures are wont to do.

The facilities needed to be expanded.
Staff was hired and, then, moved away.
The budget continually grew
To meet the demands of the day.

An organ and choir robes were purchased.
The new Methodist Hymnal came out.
The Senior MYF bought a bus.
St. John's was flourishing - without a doubt!

Each new group that was developed
Was determining a vital ministry.
Missions, outreach and evangelism:
All part of St. John's legacy.

The first fifty years of success and growth
Are a testimony to those Christians and their witness.
We pray that we may be such stewards
For a God who expects nothing less.

The physical and spiritual foundations have been laid
Preparing us for what the future might bring.
May we continually strive to make St. John's
A place to worship and praise Christ the King.

—Susie Easterling