



On this first worship service of the “Trailwood Village” Methodist Church, we gather in a spirit of thanksgiving. The seeds planted today will grow into an active arm of the Church. Long after we have gone, this Church will live on as a witness to the Kingdom of God in this community. All we have to do is to water the seeds in the years to come.

From the Church Bulletin Palm Sunday 1972

In the Beginning | By Michael Clapp

When asked to help kick off the celebration of the Church's 25th Anniversary with a message about the first five years, it was accepted with the understanding that it would be from a child's perspective because, in 1972, I was only eleven years old. That's two years older than my oldest child, Taylor, and I wonder what he will remember about his experience at KUMC when asked at the Church's 50th Anniversary.

I'm not sure what my first memory is, but I have several images that remind me of the Church, especially before it was what most members see today.

I remember helping my dad set out a sign on Saturday afternoons that advertised KUMC. They had arrows to help prospective members find our current meeting place. The adults began holding services in each other's homes led by a former minister, Bill Lufburrow. The Lufburrow name may sound familiar since his son still is involved in Goodwill, Bill's full-time job when the church first started. The kids were in several homes – either a nursery or a Sunday School Class. It wasn't long before the adults outgrew the houses and moved into the meeting room at the Trailwood Village Square. This is today's Family Outreach Center, but in the early 1970s, it was the only commercial building in Kingwood. Friendswood had its offices there, along with a barber shop and convenience store. The room was small, similar to most of our Sunday School classrooms. Can you imagine if your Sunday School Class today was the church?!

I remember the day that the United Methodist Church appointed our first minister, Jack Shelton. He had a young family and was excited about helping this church grow. It was interesting to meet weekly at the Trailwood Village Square and see the street sign stating, "Future Site of Methodist Church." Some say we started the church just to help Friendswood fulfill its planned community concept – but I don't think that's true. I'm sure that a tenuous moment for the adults involved at that time was to borrow the money to purchase the Parsonage on Lake Village Drive.

I remember outgrowing the meeting room and moving to the Forest Cove Community Center. That necessitated the weekly chores of setting up chairs, taking down chairs, and cleaning up from the previous night's party. We built portable cabinets on rollers that could be locked up. They served as dividers for the Sunday School classes that met in the Center before the service. I think I've seen some of those dividers still in some rooms over in the gym.

I remember helping Rev. Shelton serve communion. I also remember the portable building that the Church purchased and placed behind the Community Center. It served as the Church Office and as the nursery. It was later moved to the site after the gym was built and continued to serve in several capacities for well beyond its intended life.

I guess the thing that I remember the most and will continue to cherish is the memory of the adults who all pitched in, each using their talent to see that the work of the Church was completed. We had an architect, corporate treasurer, construction contractor, educators, vocalists, etc...all using their resources to fill needs. Another memory is how we joined other area churches in an Easter Service. There used to be a huge garden at Trailwood Village Drive and Kingwood Drive intersection. It was a great setting for a Sunrise Service. Just before the gym was completed, we held a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. There was no heat yet, so everyone bundled up. It was probably the largest manger reenactment ever!

I think most people who move into Kingwood or any community expect that a church of their chosen denomination will be there. The foresight, wisdom, and fortitude of the first United Methodist couples that chose Kingwood as their new home is pretty unbelievable. I know that today our Church faces several different challenges each year – staffing, finances, facilities, and volunteers. But in comparison to what we have accomplished, they are only minor. We have a good foundation, one that can be built on for years and years to come.

1978 – 1982 | By Bill F. Taylor

In 1978, our first two buildings were already inadequate to meet the needs of almost 1,000 members. Sunday School classes were held in almost every place imaginable, and often the gym had standing-room-only attendance for worship.

KUMC desperately needed both classrooms and a sanctuary. "Experts" informed us the church's ability to finance a building program was limited to only one or the other, but certainly not both. Interest rates were climbing daily, and the ability to finance even one of our needs was in jeopardy. Despite this, the building committee, chaired by Brad York, with a great deal of faith, proposed that the Sanctuary and two classroom buildings be built at \$1.4 million. After much prayer, the board approved the proposal and would see long sessions. Members were asked to increase their average pledge by 50% in the Stewardship Campaign of 1978. The campaign succeeded with a 42% increase over the

previous year. With a current debt of \$400,000, mortgage financing was out of the question. A bond program was our only hope. Our "experts" again informed us that statistically, we should only be able to sell possibly \$600,000 to \$800,000 in bonds. Others advised that if we could reach the higher level, we would have a reasonable opportunity to sell the rest on the open market. The first bond drive netted over \$700,000, and on faith, the ground was broken on August 12, 1979. Work was begun on all three structures. A second and third bond drive brought the total to \$1.1 million, and with minor deletions in plans coupled with help from the Texas Methodist Foundation, the job was completed. The first services were held in the new sanctuary on Sunday, July 13, 1980.

The accomplishment was truly a miracle. The difficult bond drives accomplished financing at approximately 9% when our members could have invested in CD's that yielded closer to 15%.

Undoubtedly, the Lord's spirit touched our members and made this possible.

During this time, a third minister was added to the staff. Rev. Charles Tucker took the reigns of our music program. He inherited a fine basic program that volunteers and part-time staff had developed. He laid the foundation for the music program to grow as it continues to this day.

After leading this congregation through 10 years of explosive growth, Jack Shelton was appointed in August 1982 as Senior Pastor of the First Methodist Church in Bryan. Jack's contributions to this church are too numerous to recount. His leadership and witness were and are felt in every aspect of this church's life.

Ben R. Chamness replaced Jack, and with a membership of 1,800, a new chapter in KUMC history began.

1982 – 1987 | By Susan Prichard

During the past month, I have had the "opportunity" (according to Tom Wussow) to research the history of Kingwood United Methodist Church from 1982 – 1987. Digging through old files, records and newsletters have brought back many wonderful memories of KUMC. Reflecting on the findings, I realized how life continually changes and what an important role our church plays in our lives.

1982 was a year coupled with a bit of sadness and a sense of anticipation. Jack Shelton, who had led Kingwood through 10

years of service and explosive growth, was appointed Senior Pastor of the First Methodist Church in Bryan in August of 1982. Jack's contributions were numerous, and his love for our church and the community would be missed.

Dr. Ben Chamness was appointed the second Senior Minister of KUMC. He had been Senior Pastor at the Methodist Temple in Port Arthur and concentrated his early efforts on reinforcing and enhancing the existing ministries and programs of the church.

On November 20, 1982, KUMC celebrated its 10th anniversary with a slide presentation showing the heritage of our church. A time capsule was sealed and will be opened on our 25th anniversary in November.

During the 80s, our church continued to grow. In 1982, the membership was 1,991. In the five years from 1982 to 1987, the membership grew to 2,777. Our budget increased from \$731,659 to \$1,036,847 during that same time.

Don White replaced Wayne Middleton as Associate Pastor in

1981. Don's work at all levels and ages of Christian Education was valuable to our growth. The First Annual Family retreat at Lakeview was held in March of 1982, and twenty-eight families participated.

Charles Tucker was Minister of Music. With his leadership, the music program continued to grow and be a vital part of our worship services. Tim Abel succeeded Charles.

Billy Richter and Leslie LeGrand helped play an important part in planning and carrying out many successful programs at Kingwood.

The Society of St. Stephen was organized in the fall of 1981. Since its beginning, this program has provided food, bedding, and clothing to many needy people in our area. Numerous individuals have received Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets provided by this mission.

Other outreach programs such as U.M. Army, the Singles ministry, School for Little Children, and Mother's Day Out continued to be a vital part of our church.

The Liturgical Wall Hanging, designed by Peggy Davis, was dedicated on June 9, 1985. The sixteen individual blocks contain symbols of our faith taken from the Old and New Testaments. Many members contributed to the quilting of this beautiful wall hanging.

Alice Dickinson was nominated and awarded the title of Texas Mother of the Year in 1982.

UMW continued to be an important program of our church. Some of their projects included making boxes for the Seaman's Center and baking cookies for college students. Their silent auction helped raise funds for missions.

By 1985, KUMC needed more classroom space. Despite the difficult economic times (resulting from the recession in the oil industry in 1986), a campaign, Forward in Faith, was launched to build the needed classrooms. Sufficient pledges were raised to start construction.

In 1986, a new building committee was created, and an architect was selected. This building project included a new addition on the west end of the gym for the youth, adult, and music programs. The kitchen was enlarged, and renovations were made to the administration building.

Through the generous contributions of members, classes, and groups at KUMC, the indebtedness on the land where our church buildings were located was retired in 1986. This land was originally purchased from Friendswood Development by the Houston Methodist Board of Missions. It was deeded to the church when the congregation was established.

Fifteen years of fellowship and commitment had come to an end in 1987. Members were able to be a part of a ministry reaching out in Christian witness, evangelism, and missions, serving one another as part of God's love in our world.

1987 – 1992 | By Jay Gardner

By 1987 our membership was 2,500, our budget was \$858,000, and we were in the midst of another building expansion program. This time we were moving "Forward in Faith" with expenditures of \$750,000. We were adding a third education building, renovating our church offices, modernizing and enlarging our kitchen, and adding a youth wing to the gym. This year we also expanded our Sunday School program to include two sessions and introduced a third worship service. Dr. Ben Chamness was at the mid-point of his 10-year appointment at KUMC. Dr. Leslie LeGrand and Billy Richter were our Associate Ministers, and Tim

Abel was our Minister of Music. But what I most remember about 1987 was when our depressed local economy finally hit bottom, and we began seeing it negatively impacting our membership and our church finances. Companies were in the midst of mega-merger activities, "re-engineering" was the new buzzword for white-collar layoffs, and many members were either losing their jobs or beginning to question how long before they would be next. For the first time in our church's history, our income fell to less than the prior year, and we struggled with serious financial issues.

Virgil Swift, Chair/Finance, appeared in all three worship

services with his famous "State of the Union" message to lay out the seriousness of our financial situation and the dilemma our church leadership was having with planning our budget for 1988. We were told the budget would be set once the Stewardship Campaign was completed and it was known what income we could expect for 1989. If the membership didn't want us cutting programs and mission giving, we would have to consider seriously increasing our financial giving. The message was heard, and we answered. That year the pledges received increased by a record 19% over the prior year! Remembering how our congregation responded despite

all the pessimism and gloom clouding the economy was one of the significant milestones in our church's history and a time when our congregation began moving toward taking our Christian Stewardship responsibilities more seriously.

In 1989 we had numerous staff changes. Dale Horton became our newest Associate Minister, Scotty Rundell, our new Director of Music, Royce Hickman, our new full-time Business Manager, and our first full-time Youth Director, Shelly Sewell, was added. At about this time, Linda Graham became our first Director of Education. We added a part-time printer and began publishing our Forest Reflections and other printed materials in-house. This was also the year we sold our Forest Cove parsonage and had 129 volunteers go to U.M. Army.

The biggest highlight of 1990 for most of us was when we joined Dr. LeGrand and his family at the church to help them celebrate his 50th year in the Methodist ministry. It was a great celebration for all in attendance, and we did our best to let Leslie and Mary Margaret know how much they are loved and respected for all they have done for our church and God's ministry. This was also the year Jack Donner and the Long Range Planning Committee finalized a long-range plan aimed at taking us out to the year 2000 and outlined major priorities and goals on which our leadership

should attempt to keep us focused. Interestingly, I recall the #1 problem identified that KUMC would need to address in the early '90s was "inadequate parking spaces." U.M. Army had 186 volunteers and, for the first time, was attending four different camps.

As we entered 1991, the big news was a change in our organizational structure. Whereas we previously had 75 or more members sitting on the Administrative Board and Council on Ministries, we would now have our major business matters handled by a 12-member Administrative Council. Our goal was to place more emphasis on service to God through one of the ministries offered by our church, not spend time sitting in a committee meeting. Our new mission statement was adopted, and our new slogan became: "A church where faith and ministry go hand in hand." It was my privilege and great honor to be the Chair of Administrative Council in 1991 and 1992. Phil Lively was our Lay Leader, our budget for 1991 was \$1.1 million, and by year's end, our membership had grown to 3,141.

In 1992, Dr. Chamness celebrated his 10th year of service at KUMC, and then we found it necessary to say goodbye as he and Joye prepared for their move to Tyler and Ben's new appointment to Marvin UMC. Both Ben and Joye made enormous contributions to

the life and growth of our church, which are too numerous to list, so let me just document that we are a much better church today because of the great leadership and good example they both brought us. On August 27, we welcomed our third Senior Minister, William A. (Buddy) Miller, and his charming wife, Julia, to Kingwood. Buddy and Julia had previously been at Clear Lake UMC for many years. In November, we had a festive 20th Anniversary Celebration and enjoyed having Jack Shelton and Ben Chamness back with us.

As 1992 came to a close, we launched our "Catch the Vision" campaign to help fund additional parking lot construction, a new elevator, and the purchase of 2.19 acres of land and apartments located across the street immediately north of our Sanctuary. Tom Wussow deserves recognition for helping with the negotiations and leading us to agree to seize this opportunity to acquire this property. In December, we closed on purchasing the land, and our membership was 3,257.

1992 – 1997

By Tom Wussow

Changes in staff seem consistent in each article, and this period is no exception. Rev. G.W. "Dub" Shepherd joined us in 1994 as our Minister of Music. Joel McMahon joined us in 1995 as an Associate Minister. Rev. Joe Fort was appointed to KUMC at Annual Conference in 1996. We are blessed to have Stephanie

McMahon and Margaret Fort with us as a result of these changes. 1996 also brought many staff changes: Chuck Burchard became our Youth Director replacing Don Kenaly; Shelia Evans, our organist since 1985, became our first Music Associate; and Jane Bradley replaced Rita Ritter as Nursery Director. In

1997, Beverly Suddarth became our Director of Education when Linda Graham chose retirement; and Sabra Williams joined the staff as Director of the combined School for Little Children/Mother's Day Out Program as long-time directors Janey Smith (MDO) and Cindy McGaughey (SLC) moved on to other fields. These

appointments prove that, once again, PPR did a good job! Unless I have miscalculated, Dale Horton and Royce Hickman are the only senior staff members that survived from the last article! Thanks to Dale and Royce for some stability.

As was mentioned in the last article, we closed out the last five-year period with the purchase of what is now the Family Outreach Center and a Capital Campaign called "Catch the Vision." The next major step in our journey was the payoff of our church bonds (Alleluia) and the consolidation of all remaining debt into a six-year note with Nations Bank. This was done in 1994. Even with the additional debt associated with the trustees' recent "upgrade" program, we will be debt free by 2001 – a great way to start the new century!

We completed a new Long-Range Plan in 1995, which contained, among other things, a recommendation to proceed with another Capital Campaign to fund the expansion and renovation of our facilities. That program was "The Vision Continues," and the construction is underway as we celebrate our anniversary. It includes converting the garage into classroom space, renovating and upgrading the Chancel Choir area, and adding a new parlor and enlarged Narthex area. Also included are an expansion of the library and the addition of several new offices in the Administration Building. Contributions and pledges are still welcome (and needed!). Lest we think this is the last call or need for Capital Funds, a list is already developing for future needs.

Every church has a personality or culture that begins with its formation and evolves as it develops. KUMC is a unique

fellowship. We have always had a "can do" attitude and a strong community outreach. Our church has provided both clergy and lay leadership in the Kingwood community on many social and spiritual issues (Society of St. Stephen, Career Resource Center, and Clergy Association, to name a few). Also, we have had a strong emphasis on missions and Christian education. Our policy on second-mile giving (an amount equal to our Conference apportionments) is admired throughout the Conference. Our U.M. Army leadership and participation are a hallmark of our commitment to missions and youth programs. In summary, KUMC is one of the outstanding churches in the Texas Annual Conference – and in just 25 years!

God has clearly had a guiding hand in our formation, growth, and ministerial leadership. Some of the earlier articles included illustrations of God at work in our midst. Often it is easier to understand God's guidance or plan in retrospect. I would like to focus on our ministerial leadership for a moment. Each of our Senior Ministers was called for a purpose and a time. Each one fulfilled a specific need in the growth of KUMC. Jack Shelton gave us the creativity and enthusiasm needed to get it started – a pioneer spirit in a new church and community. Ben Chamness came at a time when we needed stability and organization – mainstream leadership as we became a large church during Houston's worst financial recession. Buddy Miller brought us a renewed focus on the need for Bible study and the fundamentals of our faith. It was an emphasis that came just when it was needed in our growth – we had come out of the financial struggle and were ready to look to the future.

History will also show us that Joe Fort, Jr. was in the right place at the right time – a strong preacher steeped in solid theology to lead us into the 21st century. (Yes, Joe, we expect you to be here a while). A reflection on this progression cannot help but recognize God at work, and it also speaks well of our Methodist system of ministerial appointment.

What about the future? The next 25 years? I hope we continue our focus on outreach and missions. We still have a lot of "unchurched" people in this community. I hope we will continue to provide leadership in the community and the Conference. The future of the United Methodist Church may very well depend on the influence we and others bring to bear on the fulfillment of the Church's mission. The last General Conference said it well in rewriting the Church's mission. Simply put, it is to create disciples of and for Jesus Christ. We will probably reach 4,000 members next year and will continue to need space and facilities to accommodate growth and new or expanded programs. It is not unreasonable to think that we will be a 5,000-member church sometime in the next ten years. A real question to consider is the eventual use of the Family Outreach Center property. Should it be the site of a new and larger sanctuary or a first-class Family Life Center? How about a parking garage with facilities on the upper floors? Some committee in five or ten years will have fun with this project!

Life has been and continues to be good in the "Livable Forest." KUMC has, in no small part, impacted the quality of life in our community. I certainly hope that we continue to be a spiritual oasis in this place for a long, long time.

1998 – 2002 | By Woody Barksdale

Thank you for the opportunity to write my perspective on the growth of our church during this five-year period.

Joe Fort was our senior pastor, and he was definitely God's instrument in our congregation during this time. It was my honor to be his prayer partner once a week on our Wednesday lunch hour, and Joe truly had a heart for our Lord. His wife Margaret began a "Young Moms" bible study that has been a catalyst for bringing young couples to our church to this day!

Our Missions Committee Outreach grew by leaps and bounds as we traveled to various cities in Mexico and Farr, Texas, to help the needy. Judy Tefteller was one of our Associate Pastors that helped spearhead many of these efforts.

Another one of our associate pastors, Chris Harrison, alongside Scott Austin, our youth pastor, had the vision for our contemporary worship services. They began in February 1999 and ultimately changed from Sunday evenings to Thursday evenings and then ultimately to Sunday mornings. Chris & Scott grew this "Impact" worship service to what is today known as the "Vine."

Scott also helped grow our youth group with MYF, "After Glow," Bible studies, confirmation retreats, "Ground Zero," "Break thru" and "Extreme retreats," Christian concerts, swing dances, laser tag, paintball, hayrides, lock-ins, pool parties, progressive dinners, flag football, "Road Rules" and "refuge" Retreats, and last but not least UM ARMY. Many adult volunteers like Hank & Nancy Bray and Celia Ellis helped to keep it

fun and spirit-led. Many of these youth attend and are leaders in our church today.

Our only 8:30 Sunday School Class, "Joy Class," began at this time, and still meet today! Alpha Bible Study, Walk to Emmaus, and Wednesday night bible studies brought many new members to our church during this era of KUMC. Men's ministry flourished under the leadership of David Hatcher & Purvis Harper during this time.

It is exciting to look back on the growth in our church and the results of us having a closer walk and deeper faith in our Lord. "Save your Fork" because the best is yet to come!"

2003 – 2007 | By Steve and Becky Reeves

It is hard to focus on just five years since we have been part of this church for 47 years. So much has happened, and all have been good...praise the Lord! We joined the church when it was meeting in the Forest Cove Civic Center, and we would get to church early to put out folding chairs. It seems like yesterday!

From 2003 to 2007, KUMC continued to grow and establish its role in Kingwood! Looking back over the years, many activities, such as UM Army, mission trips, leadership changes, etc., continued to function on an annual basis. And membership growth continued. KUMC initiated the "Building the Vision" campaign to address the growth needs. In August 2006, KUMC added a new Koinonia Center known as the "K" Building,

remodeled the preschool area in the E Building, renovated the Society of St. Stephens rooms, and added revisions to the Sanctuary and more parking.

Probably the most significant happening during this period was the Red Cross shelter KUMC sponsored following terrible Hurricane Katrina in the last week of August 2005. We had been a stand-by shelter for other events, but this time we proactively encouraged the Red Cross to formalize our church as a shelter. I admit we had no real idea of the challenge we had taken on! The following week in September, we were in operation. KUMC members rose to the occasion and worked together tirelessly for over three weeks to make this horrible event result in a largely positive one. From feeding 100 to

200 people daily to helping those in the shelter locate their families to helping residents get clothing and basic needs and pursue financial assistance. We had round-the-clock coverage on shift for all anticipated activities. Some local businesses helped with food and transportation to and from showers at the local middle school. Residents at large came to the church to offer their help... it really was a community-wide response! Awareness of our effort made it all the way to Oakview, CA! Sheila Anderson wrote KUMC to acknowledge our effort saying, "You Texans are certainly doing yourselves proud by your generosity and caring for the Katrina refugees." The shelter was covered by the Ventura County STAR newspaper and her son had lived in Humble.

There were also two mission trips to Mexico; one to Reynosa and the second to La Carboneras. Both trips entailed some construction and repair as well as medical treatment by doctors that were members of KUMC.

In April 2006, our Associate Pastor Chris Harrison was appointed to pastor of First United Methodist Church in Bay City, Texas. His replacement in December 2006

was Patrick Evans, who had recently graduated from Asbury Seminary in Kentucky.

In 2007, Meadowlark Lemon, legendary basketball star of the Harlem Globetrotters, visited KUMC in April. He was an ordained minister of 22 years and sang and preached. He called the young athletes up to the front of the room and blessed them for what they do!

Another special event involving our church in March 2007 was the KUMC Choir visit to Carnegie Hall as part of the Kingwood Chorale, a group of choirs from Kingwood, Atascocita, Huffman, Humble, New Caney, etc. They performed Mozart's "Solemn Vespers," accompanied by the New England Symphonic Ensemble.

2008 – 2012 | By Clay and Mimi Lawson

From 2008 – 2012 our family was young, with two small boys and a baby girl. Our days revolved around activities at KUMC 5 -6 days a week. In 2008, Reverend Jim Welch joined the KUMC staff as Senior Pastor leading our congregation and overseeing a robust operating budget of \$2.5MM+.

During this time, our pastoral staff also included Reverend Patrick Evans (serving from December 2006 through February 2012), Reverend Matt Stone (appointed in June 2009 and serving until June 2013), and Reverend Ellen Kent. Travis & Blake, and later on Shelby, were all enrolled at SLC, School for Little Children, and actively participated in Sunday School, singing in the children's choir under the direction of Jan Arnold and Ben Tallcott, and Easter flower cross (a family favorite). Wednesday mornings were busy at KUMC with several "mature moms," including Melinda Dodd, Linda Richter, Jane Davis, and Linda Ferguson, continuing to host the Young Mom's bible study with Jane Bradley's nursery staff offering loving care for our infants through preschool-age children. Vacation Bible School was a huge hit in the summer of 2010 with Galactic Blast! and was attended by hundreds of children from throughout the Kingwood community.

KUMC's Young Family's Ministry began hosting Friday movie nights in the gym, family camp outs including an overnigher at Lake Houston Wilderness Park in March 2011, and YMCA's Camp Cullen in subsequent years while continuing to host Jesus's Birthday Party in conjunction with the 11:00 am Children's Christmas Eve service. In the Fall of 2011, Reverend Ellen introduced us to JAM, Jesus Arts and Music for children starting with a Wednesday night dinner of spaghetti and cookies to coincide with adult bible studies, the precursor to what is now known as "The Table," along with choir and music rehearsals for all ages. Children's Ministry events included Breakout for older elementary children and Wee Serve Tennis Camps for the littles.

Adult ministries were dynamic, with Men's Ministry expanded by Reverend Patrick Evans to include a variety of men's studies and small groups that had been missing for the "Young Dads." In February 2011, KUMC hosted its 3rd Annual sell-out Valentine's Dinner presented by the Women's and Men's Ministries, including dinner by Italiano's and illusion entertainment by Phillip and Henry Productions. In December of 2011, KUMC said goodbye to Amy Creamer as Director of the School for Little Children with her family's move to Corpus Christi.

With Amy's departure, Stacey Sweet took over the leadership of the SLC.

Refugio, KUMC's Spanish-speaking service, began meeting in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings in 2012, led by Reverend Sarah Reyes. Aaron Hale joined KUMC as a worship leader in the Vine service, moving from Kansas City in January 2012. Important conversations began in August 2012 concerning the future space for children's ministry, SLC, and how that fit in with the architecture and design of the highly anticipated major church campus reconfiguration, which would create a welcoming "front door," improve logistics, provide ample room for our rapidly expanding ministries and create a new "church home" for all.

2013 – 2017 | By Kimberly Watson

As 2013 started, Jim Welch continued to lead our church with Chris Harrison, Ken Munn, Judy Tefteller, and Ellen Kent. Our congregation was growing, and it was evident that an expansion of the building would be necessary to keep up with the growing Kingwood community. The Built Together project was started and eventually led to the addition of a \$12 million, 56,000 square-foot facility that, when completed in 2015, added new office space, meeting and Sunday school rooms, a new music wing, and a spacious commons area that has been used for multiple ministries and gatherings. The kitchen in the gym was also given a much-needed upgrade. When the foundation was poured and the structural beams in place, the church gathered for a Fiesta on the Foundation in October 2014 to break bread together (in the form of tortillas) and dedicate the building in prayer and scripture. Our community covered these beams with scripture verses and prayers written in Sharpie to remind ourselves that no matter what building we worship in, our foundation is forever built on God and His Word. When the building was opened, an around-the-clock Bible reading was held as individuals and families took part in reading God's Word from Genesis through Revelation over a nearly three-day period in the beautiful new Prayer Chapel. Throughout the Built Together campaign to initially fund the construction project and the follow-up debt relief campaign, Rising Up, the congregation of

KUMC once again showed their abundance of generosity by raising over \$8.6 million to fund this extraordinary facility.

One of the first missional uses for our new facility was a joint venture with Mission of Hope Haiti. In 2015, tables were set up across the Commons area while members and friends took shifts packing over 50,000 meals. The following year, we doubled that with over 100,000 meals, and then in 2017, we again broke a record by packing 134,000 meals. It was a beautiful example of using what God had given us to bless others across the world.

The congregation of KUMC has always had deep roots in missions since its inception. In 2014, a new ministry was spawned from an unlikely encounter with four children who came to the church one day simply because they were thirsty. The relationship between these children and some families in our congregation led to a deeper understanding of the lack of support for fostering families. In 2016, the Oasis ministry was created, initially in a small closet in our new commons area, to supply foster kids with all the items they would need to transition into their new home placement. This became a much larger ministry with Parent Nights Out, assisting with school supplies, Christmas gifts, and adoption celebrations. At the time of this writing, in 2022, it is still expanding and is providing emergency shelter for children without placement. It has provided an amazing outreach

opportunity with the Department of Family and Protective Services.

In June of 2017, Jim Welch retired after 45 years in ministry. Scott Dornbush was appointed our new head pastor, and two months later, Kingwood was devastated by a crippling hurricane. On August 17, Hurricane Harvey landed on the Texas coast as a category four hurricane, bringing with it over 40 inches of rainfall that led to the flooding of thousands of homes in the Kingwood area. KUMC once again stepped into action without even the slightest hesitation. Members immediately went out into the community, work tools in hand, and mucked out over 200 houses throughout our community for members and non-members alike. The children's ministry opened the church for child care for anyone who needed a safe place for their kids to play while working on their own house that had flooded or for volunteers assisting in the clean-out process. Around 300 kids over a five-day period were loved on by our children's staff and volunteers, making it possible for parents to endure the messy and sometimes dangerous work that needed to be done to make their houses again livable for their families. The congregation of KUMC has proven time and time again that when there is a need, God's people are here and ready to move and do His work.

2018 – 2022

By Kerry Hamilton

Challenging years! Preparing to write this brief history of the past five years in the life of the KUMC, these words repeatedly came to mind. Yet, in the midst of the challenges and difficulties, the church has continued to expand its ministries, missions, and membership.

Recovering from the devastation of Harvey continued to be the main goal for many members of the congregation, as well as Kingwood in general, in 2018. Many families would not return to their homes until the end of the year and beyond. The church, SOSS, and Helping Hands continued to help families needing support, supplies, and food. The Pastors and church leadership guided the church to reach out and help those around us.

A heavy blow was dealt to the church in late January of 2018 when our Senior Pastor of 6 months, Scott Dornbush, suffered a major heart attack on January 24th and subsequently passed away on February 13th. His funeral took place on the 19th of February at the church with an overflowing Sanctuary. Scott's leadership during the previous six months in the aftermath of Harvey was critical for the church. Members were deeply affected by his passing. Leading the church over the next five months fell to Associate Pastors Chris Harrison and John Wayne McMann, with the support of recently retired pastor Jim Welch. Under their guidance, the church staff and congregation began recovery from the loss of Scott.

In July, the leadership of KUMC passed to Reverend Dr. Burt Palmer as the new Senior Pastor. Stacey Sweet joined the Pastoral staff in the second half of the year

as an Associate Pastor. Previously, Stacey oversaw the church's Confirmation Programs for our 6th-grade students. Under her guidance, the church had seen some of the largest confirmation numbers in its history. The church membership during this year reached 4,625 members with a budget of \$2,628,172. The remainder of the year fell to continued recovery and getting to know our new Senior Pastor.

Retrospectively, 2019 was a relatively quiet year in the life of the church, at least compared to what had been and what was to come. The church grew to 4,680 members with a budget of \$2,830,341. The ministries of the church continued to grow and expand both locally and globally.

Several staff changes took place during this year. Karen Soliz became the Director of Children's Ministries, and Wrynn Homann took over as the Young Families Ministry Coordinator. In May 2019, Matt Robinson came on board as the Director of Music and Worship Arts, replacing David Allen, who had departed earlier.

COVID! It would shut down the world in three months! This one word dominated and overshadowed everything in 2020 and 2021.

At the start of the year, COVID had little effect on the church and the Houston area. Drastically, everything changed in February with the cancellation of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo after a short two-week run. March would follow with more drastic changes. KUMC closed its doors on March 13th, canceling all events and worship services. From the Vine worship space, Associate Pastor John Wayne McMann delivered a prerecorded

message on the 15th and, shortly thereafter, resumed livestream messages. Prerecorded worship from the sanctuary first aired on March 29th. The first Parking Lot Communion drive-through took place on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. Prerecorded Easter messages were delivered from both Town Center Park and the church.

Early in March, Pastor Burt and his wife Shawn led a group of 28 Pilgrims on a tour of the Holy Land. On March 6th, as the group was preparing for one more day of their tour in Bethlehem, the Pilgrims received word that Israel was closing its borders. Anxious hours later, the border was reopened for specific tour groups, and the Pilgrims traveled to Israel. On March 13th, seventeen group members boarded their scheduled flights back to the US. The remaining eleven, however, were not scheduled to return until the 17th. With much anxiety, worry, and faith, the eleven were able to rebook flights back on March 15th. Four flights after the last Pilgrims departed, Israel closed all travel in and out of the country. Only by the power of prayer from the Pilgrims and the church here at home were they able to make it back.

SOSS shut down for one week and then continued client services with a curbside drive-through. This would continue throughout 2020 and into the following year. Drive-through Thanksgiving and Christmas Baskets were handed out with a line of cars stretched around the church. Volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to meet the needs of the clients while following the guidelines set down by local and state governments as well as the church.

Of course, ministries throughout the church were shut down. Pastors, staff, and lay leaders postponed, rescheduled, and, if necessary, canceled events and activities. All diligently strived to ensure that once restrictions were lifted, all ministries and missions were positioned to resume serving with as little difficulty as possible.

In-person worship initially returned on July 14, 2020, under the guidelines of Social Distancing. Ninety-Nine members attended the first service back in the Vine, with everyone wearing a mask. There were starts and stops along the way, but finally, in-person worship began to fully return on August 16, 2020, with services at 9:30 and 11:00 in both worship spaces.

Staff changes occurred as well in 2020. Associate Pastor John Wayne McMann moved to Tyler, and Associate Pastor Jeremy Bass joined the staff. Under the guidance of Pastor Jeremy, the first Healing Service began on the second Sunday of November, helping to meet and care for the needs of those seeking healing and forgiveness. During 2020, despite the challenges, membership grew to 4,688 with a budget of \$2,934,872.

Moving into 2021, church growth continued reaching 4,710 members and a budget of \$2,961,674. Staff changes continued in July when Pastor Chris Harrison moved to Athens, Texas as the Senior Pastor of the First Athens United Methodist Church. Youth Minister Clint Wylie became an Associate Pastor, and Blake De Llacer became the Director of Student Ministries, which Clint had previously led.

Ministry and Missions continued to grow in 2021. The Oasis Foster care program opened a temporary shelter in the family life center apartment on the east end of the second floor. This was

a direct response to Children's Protective Services' struggles to find shelter and homes for children in Foster Care. This shelter stands out today as an example of what a temporary shelter should be for these children. UMARMY returned as well in the summer of 2021 with two camps building wheelchair ramps and proclaiming Jesus Christ to those in need in Chandler and Jasper.

Missions continued as a focus into 2022 as the church's Helping Hands ministry began to work at Angel Reach, a program for youth in Foster Care who have aged out of the system. This program provides shelter, clothing, and training for these individuals to be successful in adult life. The Moldova Mission Ministry was created in response to the war in Ukraine to serve the refugees fleeing the violence. WorkFaith Connection launched a satellite campus at KUMC in March of 2022 to provide faith-based job training and coaching for anyone desiring long-term employment. The church renewed its long-term relationship with the Bordersville community in Humble providing fellowship, food, fun, and assistance, as well as worshipping alongside them. August saw KUMC partner with Humble ISD to launch a Mentorship program with the students at Foster Elementary.

Society of St. Stephens experienced water damage on April 1st due to a plumbing leak. This caused damage to the floor and walls in the clothing side of the building, with a small amount in the reception area. Clothing was closed for three months, but food distribution was able to proceed. Clothing service reopened on June 20th.

In late June, the church began a difficult three-month Discernment Process in response to the conflict and discord in the United Methodist Church. The

process consisted of 6 information meetings answering questions submitted by the congregation to Lay Leaders and Pastors (both current and retired) as well as the Bishop of the Texas Annual Conference, Scott Jones. The culmination of this process occurred on September 25, 2022, resulting in KUMC members voting to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church at the end of the year.

As we approach the end of the 50th year of KUMC and prepare to celebrate this anniversary in the life and past of the church, I look back and see a vibrant, giving church. A church that began with the first families looking to establish a home church where they could raise their children in Jesus Christ and share their faith with the community and world around them. A church that was focused and faced outward into the world, serving and ministering to the needs of others. Kingwood United Methodist Church continues to be that church today. Looking back at the past of KUMC makes me excited to consider its future. Despite challenges and difficulties, the church, no, the people of KUMC, continue to look out into the world and ask, where can I serve? Who can I help?

The passage from Jeremiah 6:16 continues to come back to me as I look forward.

... Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls....

I know as we come and stand at the crossroads, we will continue to ask for the ancient paths, the good way, and we will walk in it. Devoted to Jesus Christ, seeking to help and serve those around us. God Bless KUMC!

“Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

- Luke 5:26

This passage follows Jesus’ calling the first of his disciples along the sea of Galilee, healing a man from leprosy and then forgiving and healing a paralyzed man. The people proclaim that they have seen remarkable things. Some translations read, “we have seen amazing things today.”

As we have celebrated the past 50 years over five weeks, we have seen remarkable, amazing things. From the humble beginning that was laity-led to seasons of growth, the heart of Kingwood UMC has been the mission and ministry to our community and world.

We will continue to see remarkable, amazing things in the next 50 years as we share that there is More to Life in Christ.

Every blessing and thriving in Christ with you,

Dr. Burt Palmer

KUMC SENIOR PASTORS

Jack Shelton	1972 - 1982
Ben Chamness	1982 - 1992
Buddy Miller	1992 - 1996
Joe Fort	1996 - 2008
Jim Welch	2008 - 2017
Scott Dornbush	2017 - 2018
Burt Palmer	2018 - Present

LET'S STAY CONNECTED!



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