



Our History

A Journey of Expanding Mission and Ministry

The Early Years: 1961–1981

It was Tom and Harriet Rogers who gathered a few other young couples, with their children, for informal worship services in their home. In the fall of 1961, the Reverend Horace Sellers shepherded the initial interest. Richard Ball also sought to have a Methodist church founded in Malibu. With strong support of Malibu residents and the Los Angeles District Missionary Society, the new Methodist congregation began on January 7, 1962. The Malibu Methodist congregation was first served by Rev. John Gabrielson, retired minister of the Palisades Methodist Church, after whom the social hall is named. After outgrowing the Rogers' home, the congregation received permission to meet at Juan Cabrillo Elementary School, first in the upstairs projection room, then in the auditorium. St. Aidan's Episcopal church later provided temporary meeting space while District Superintendent Richard Cain helped locate a permanent building site. Official organization of the church took place on Christmas Sunday, December 22, 1963. The Rev. Warren Walker, with Tom Rogers as lay leader, welcomed 69 persons as charter members, including Esther Lowry and Betty Street. Warren had served as Minister of Youth at Santa Monica First Methodist Church in 1961-62 before he was ordained in 1963. His wife, Carol, had grown up in the same church and the couple had a young son and daughter.

All the congregation lacked was a building. The extensive study of available land suitable for a church took several months. Western Malibu was just beginning to develop. Young families were building homes and growth was expected to escalate for many years. The congregation purchased a new home for a parsonage in the Malibu West subdivision. Plans for the new church building, County permits and-- with the help of the

Missionary Society-- a reasonable loan were acquired. The plans were for a 350-seat sanctuary, a chapel, bell tower and two education buildings, one of which was to contain a social hall and a small kitchenette.

On June 27, 1965, ground-breaking ceremonies were held on the three-and-one-half-acre site at 30128 Morning View Drive. Work began on the 125-seat chapel and one education building. Architect Richard Dorman won an award for his site design. The chancel was dominated by the faceted stained glass window designed and created by charter member Toby Schreiber.

The completed, intimate worship space of the chapel welcomed the faithful on March 6, 1966. Bishop Gerald Kennedy of Los Angeles attended the consecration service on March 27.

MUMC has always nurtured an active youth and children's program. With the proceeds of its workdays projects the early Methodist Youth Fellowship presented the fledgling church with its first organ. Sunday school, youth groups, choir and a women's bible study group were mainstays of church life. Charter member Dorothy Mayhugh taught Sunday school and her husband, Ray, acted as custodian for many years. The new education center is named for his brother Ben, whose estate provided the funds for the building.

In 1966, founding member Mrs. Fern Johnson began a nursery school in her home on weekday mornings. Its success soon outgrew her home and the school moved to the church site. MMNS was born. In addition, the church sponsored a 30+ member girl scout troop.

Pastor Warren Walker served the church for five years, followed in 1968 by Gilbert Walker (no relation), a former schoolteacher. After two years of ministry with great success among the youth, Gilbert Walker returned to teaching. John Hagar succeeded Gilbert Walker. He and his wife Jacqui enrolled their two young sons and a daughter in the nursery school completing the circle of the church family.

A few years after the long haul of completing the building and establishing church programs, attrition took its toll. Adults were burned out. Malibu was becoming a bedroom community and the commute took its toll on church participation. As interest rates rose, the number of new homeowners dwindled. Sunday morning attendance averaged in the 30's. The small congregation struggled to pay the mortgage on the parsonage and the church. Once again, the Methodist Conference and its Los Angeles District Missionary Society stepped in and filled the financial gap. They had helped establish this tiny church and they were determined to see it succeed. In the meantime, the church continued to bring the healing presence of God to the community: For several years, the nursery school hosted young, emotionally disturbed patients from Camarillo State Hospital. In addition, young men incarcerated at Camp Miller, a county detention facility, enjoyed Sunday morning worship, potluck meals, baseball games and discussion groups. The church's involvement with juvenile offenders continues to this day through Tales By The Sea.

Funds to continue the mission of this remarkable little church by the sea were raised in a range of creative ways. One early member initiated fruitful weekly white elephant sales, followed by an annual Flea Market, attended by vendors from throughout Southern California. Its success was credited to the hard work of the majority of the members. More recently, the church and nursery school jointly held annual rummage sales that reaped the rewards.

After eight years, John Hagar suffered personal difficulties and left his post in Malibu. Shortly thereafter he left the ministry and was divorced. He was followed in service briefly by Aubrey Johnson whose family never truly became a part of the Methodist community in Malibu. The nursery school missed the presence of the well-liked Hagar family. A year later Johnson was replaced by the Rev. Jerry Allen. This was Allen's first appointment. He served three years, then left the ministry: The congregation struggled financially and wondered why their last four ministers had left the ministry altogether. What is wrong, they asked? What is wrong with us? What's wrong with Malibu?

A survey determined that a large percentage of Malibu's population was unchurched. Many of the newer residents had left overly committed lifestyles and were happy to simply enjoy the quiet leisure of unstructured weekends in Malibu. The community was not growing. The congregation was not growing. One member, a Realtor, found a buyer for the vacant north end of the property. But the church leaders were not yet ready to abandon their vision. Neither were the District Superintendent or the Bishop.



Renewal & Growth: 1982–1999

Paul Hudson was appointed to MUMC in 1982. A widower with two grown children and a teenaged daughter at home, he possessed the experience, organization, enthusiasm and dedication that this tenacious congregation required. Under his strong spiritual leadership, the nearly failing church visibly turned around. Increased attendance, participation and membership brought new hope. The church would survive!

Following Hudson's successful ministry, the Bishop and his cabinet found a clergy couple-- known to us all as Larry and Anne (Peacock and Broyles, respectively) -- wishing to share a pastorate while raising their then small daughter and son. Anne and Larry arrived in 1985 and injected passion in the church with their complementary styles and talents.

With Larry and Anne's guidance, Sunday school, youth ministries, Sunday worship attendance and membership all grew steadily. New outreach programs gave the congregation high visibility in the community: Sierra Service Project work teams, Habitat for Humanity builds, Third World Hand Arts sales, Thanksgiving dinner for the needy, organizing and supporting the Malibu Labor Exchange and establishing Food for All in the local markets. Disciples Bible Study, Companions in Christ, spiritual growth retreats, Gospel Nights, Easter sunrise service at Zuma Beach and the women's Bible study provided spiritual sustenance. The Malibu Pie Festival has attracted hundreds of people every year and raised money for missions and youth work. Tales By the Sea concerts bring world-class storytellers to our small church.

The nursery school benefitted from Anne and Larry's supportive cooperation and encouragement.

In 1987 a new Infant Toddler Center was opened. In her long tenure as Director of Malibu Methodist Nursery School, Kay Gabbard has been a wise and passionate advocate for children. Kay also functions as a surrogate trustee, overseeing maintenance and improvements on the church campus.

In recent years the congregation enlarged and refurbished the kitchenette and remodelled the parsonage kitchen, entry and family room. In 1991, the sanctuary was visibly renewed through the efforts of a "work party." Dark red carpeting and window louvers were removed to let in God's light, literally, and oppressive black dividers eliminated. Later, seat cushions were added. Through a Major Needs Campaign in 1992, more than \$20,000 was raised to repave the parking lot, reroof the nursery school building and add handicapped access. Another work party completely repainted the parsonage in 1999. In 1999 Anne retired from the ministry in order to write full time. She remains active at MUMC and for some time continued to lead the youth group, Sierra Service Project work teams, women's support group and spiritual growth retreats. Having grown up within the MUMC community, their nearly grown children Trinity and Justus have created their own part of the ministry and remain connected to the congregation.

Fulgence Nyengele, Angela Reid and Ashley Mundt each served as Education Director following Anne's retirement. At present, Education Director Aimee Winner ably coordinates three after-school programs and Sunday school. Our outstanding music director, Joellen Friedkin, also serves as office manager. Her enthusiasm and many talents have enriched both worship and administration.

A New Century

In 2000 the church renovated and expanded its offices, added a new nursery school wing and the Mayhugh Center for Education. We now regularly host a number of groups including eight recovery groups, a Santa Monica College class, science programs for children and drama and yoga classes. Our ministries are organized around the Center for Healing-- which sponsors "The Doctor is In" weekly and healing seminars open to the public; Center for the Arts; Center for the Spirit; Center for Children, Youth and Families and the Center for Outreach.

We give thanks that MUMC was planted by the water 40 years ago and that it continues to bring hope to a thirsty world.

