

150 Year Celebration Booklet



Faith at First

First United Methodist Church

Established May 21, 1873





Bishop Lanette Plambeck - Resident Bishop
Minnesota / Dakota Area Annual Conference

Rev. Dr. Fred Vanderwerf - District Superintendent
Southern Prairie District

2023 First United Methodist Church Staff

Pastor:	Rev. Dr. Daren Flinck
Family Life Coordinator:	Gretchen O'Donnell
Youth Leader:	Lisa Gerdes
Administrative Assistant:	Lori Nienkerk
Choir Director:	Jeanette Jensen
Bell Choir Director/Choir Accompanist:	Brenda DeSmith
Organist:	Jolene Kuhl
Treasurer:	Ellen Hoefker
Custodians:	Sarah & Chad Nickel

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Pastoral Record: 1873-2023

1873-1875	B.H. Crever	1913-1915	E. H. Goodell
1875	J.W. Lewis	1916-1919	Milton G. Shuman
1875-1878	J.C. Ogle	1919-1921	A. A. Mohney
1878-1879	C.H. Dixon	1921-1926	H. F. Ackerman
1879-1880	Charles Sheldon	1926-1931	Walter E. Mahle
1880-1881	T. H. Kinsman	1931-1938	Ernest D. Groenig
1881-1882	George Merritt	1938-1944	G. E. Martin
1882-1884	B. F. Kephart	1944-1947	J. Wilbert Lillico
1884-1885	William Copp	1947-1949	Paul E. Lewis
1885-1888	E. R. Lathrop	1949-1953	James A. Leach
1888-1890	H. J. Harrington	1953-1959	J. Wesley Johnston
1890-1892	William Brown	1959-1969	Wayne Ireland
1892-1895	W. J. Robinson	1969-1975	Ernest Lowe
1895-1896	W. A. Putnam	1975-1984	Charles Nelson
1896-1899	J. M. Bull	1984-1988	Harold R. Biederman
1899-1901	C. A. Anderson	1988-1994	M. Peter Ramstad
1901-1904	Thomas Hambly	1994-2001	Thorne K. Wittstruck
1904-1909	G. A. Cahoon	2001-2013	Gordon J. Orde
1909-1910	Ralph Carleton	2013-	Daren I. Flinck
1910-1913	Fred Frederickson		

Historical Sketch from Years Ago

"When the pioneers of the national colony began to arrive in Worthington in the spring of 1872, one of their first considerations was a place of worship, and steps were taken to bring about the organization of a church society."

Thus began the spiritual life of the new settlement, as related by an early historian. A union church society was formed May 12, 1872, after several Sunday meetings. After more than a year, the union society was abandoned in favor of denominational churches, three of which were organized. The Union Congregational Church was established on May 18, 1873, the First Methodist Episcopal Church on May 21, 1873, and the Westminster Presbyterian Church on May 25, 1873. The First Lutheran Church would be established in 1876.

The first pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church was Benjamin H. Crever. Among the 30 founding members were Mr. and Mrs. Otis Bigelow, Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Sutton, Mr. and Mrs. I.N. Sater, Mr. and Mrs. Elias Spaulding, Mr. and Mrs W. Chase, Erastus Church, and Henry Humiston.

During the first year the congregation rented the Miller Hall. This property was purchased in 1874 and services were held there regularly until it burned in 1878. While the loss of their place of worship was a severe blow, the offer of the use of the Presbyterian Church provided for their needs until January, 1879. They were then permitted to hold meetings in the courthouse. The Bennett Hall, afterward known as the Masonic Hall, was rented in July, 1880.

A new church was built in the fall of 1881 at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street. It was finished in 1885 at a cost of \$2,000.

In the summer of 1902 work began on a new church building at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Eleventh Street. The structure, which cost \$20,000, was dedicated on May 3, 1903. In 1948, under the leadership of Raymond E. Mork, superintendent of the Sunday School, six spacious classrooms were added.

The current sanctuary was built and dedicated on May 19, 1963. The educational wing (upper and lower level) was added in the summer of 1966. The fellowship hall and chapel were completed in the fall of 1968.

The church covers 1,664 square feet on the ground level. There are no existing plans for any renovations, construction, or land acquisitions. The church does not actually own any parking lot space, but utilizes the public parking lot across the street to the west of the church, bank parking in the same lot, another bank and library parking lot to the north of the church, and street parking around the perimeter of the church.

Past Timeline of History of First UMC

May 2, 1872 - Pioneers of the National Colony of Worthington organized the Union Church, Prof. R. F. Humiston being one of the founders. The Rev. B. H. Crever was pastor.

Nov. 17, 1872 - First services were held in Miller Hall, built by Colony promoters to meet the needs of the growing community.

May 4, 1873 - The Union Church voted to ask the Congregational denomination to take over the Union Church.

May 21, 1873 - Those of the Methodist faith filed a certificate with the Nobles County register of deeds proclaiming the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Worthington. First pastor was Rev. B. H. Crever, and among the members of the board of trustees was Prof. Humiston, co-founder of the Union Church, Otis Bigelow and Dr. A. P. Miller, for whom Miller Hall was named.

1874 - Miller Hall purchased by the Methodists.

1878 - Fire destroyed Miller Hall. For several months Methodists worshiped at the Presbyterian Church through the courtesy of that congregation. Then services were moved to the courthouse.

July, 1880 - Methodists leased Bennett Hall, which later became the Masonic building.

Fall, 1882 - Methodists began services in their first building, located at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Ninth Street.

Summer, 1902 - Work began on a new church at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Eleventh Street.

May 3, 1903 - The church at Fourth Avenue and Eleventh Street was dedicated.

May 19, 1963 - The new First Methodist Church was dedicated, climaxing 90 years of continuous services here as Methodists.

Summer, 1966 - Educational unit completed. Open house was held September 11, 1966.

April, 1968 - The Methodist Church joins with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church.

Fall, 1968 - Fellowship Hall and Chapel completed.

1973 - Celebrated 100 years of growth and achievement.

1998 - Celebrated 125 years of ministry.

May 21, 2023 - Celebrated 150 years of mission and ministry to the world.

The Emmanuel United Methodist Church

The founding of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Worthington had its origin in the migration of a number of Evangelical families from Illinois to the prairies of southwestern Minnesota. Devout God-fearing Christians, they met in the homes for weekly prayer meetings. In 1877, the Rev. B. Simon preached in various homes in Worthington.

Years later, Evangelical ministers at Luverne began coming to Worthington to preach to the Evangelical people. In the fall of 1887, they began to hold regular meetings in the old Methodist Episcopal Church. The Rev. L. S. Staph of Luverne preached for them. After a few services in the old M. E. Church, they rented the hall over the old Schmidt Shoe Store. This hall became too small, so the hall over the Breeding Furniture Store was rented.



On June 10, 1889, the congregation assembled for the purpose of organization and incorporation, adopting the name Emmanuel Evangelical Church. The Rev. S. B. Goetz was the pastor - charter members names included Apel, Doeden, and Moss. In the fall of 1891, a building was constructed on the corner of the present location. Here the congregation worshipped and carried on its activities until the spring of 1923, when this building was demolished to make room for the present building. The last service was held in the old church on May 13, 1923.

The cornerstone of the new church was laid on July 15, 1923 and the new church building was dedicated on Nov. 18, 1923. On November 16, 1946, The Evangelical Church and The United Brethren Church united to form The Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB). In 1950 during the pastorate of the Rev. W. H. Wiener, the church reached its largest membership of 201.

Over the years, even with declining membership, Emmanuel Church never lost sight of its mission, its passion for bringing the good news to the world and its desire to know God's Word. When the EUB Church merged with the Methodist Church in 1968, Emmanuel elected to remain on its own. The congregation worked with First United Methodist to obtain pastoral leadership and staff support.

After decades of faithful service to the Lord, Emmanuel Church voted to close at the end of June 2020. Emmanuel's last service was held on Sunday, June 28, 2020. The building was sold to the Hispanic Seventh Day Adventist Church of Worthington.

The Ransom Methodist Church

In 1877, the Ransom Union Sunday School was organized. Meetings were held in the homes. In 1891, the members decided to put up a church building. Land was donated by a Mr. Beason with the understanding that if the church ever disbanded, the land would be returned to him. This church was located about eight miles southwest of Worthington.

The church was built in 1891 and dedicated in May, 1892. It was added to the Rushmore charge of the Methodist Church. John Scott was on the building committee. He had helped build two other churches before this one. In 1900, he moved to Worthington and was chairman of the building committee for the Worthington Methodist Episcopal Church at 4th Avenue and 11th Street. There were no pews in the Ransom Church. Wooden chairs, large and small, were used for seating. This building was heated with a "pot-bellied" stove in the center of the room. Kerosene lamps were used for lighting. A pump organ supplied the music.

The church was used continuously until 1920 when practically all the families moved to Worthington. In 1924, it was sold and then torn down. Mr. Beason no longer owned the farm from which this land was taken, so the land was sold and the money was given to the conference. Hymn books and other small items were given to other congregations in need of them.



In 1876, Knut Thomas rode horseback into the village of Adrian. He met with some friends, original settlers in that area - Olson, Peterson, Fields and Child. They made arrangements for their church meetings and the hotel Mr. Child owned. And so it began, those who had been worshipping together - Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans and Congregationalists. The hotel stood where the Adrian Auto Service now began there.



After moving around in different locations for worship, the church members decided it was time to build a church building. In 1886, the new church was built, secured from a \$1300 loan from the Church Extension Society of the Methodist Church. The new church was dedicated in 1888. Throughout those years, the people experienced good times and bad times.

In 1906, Magnolia and Adrian became part of the same circuit. It was a relationship that was to endure until 2018, when Adrian began a new relationship with First and Emmanuel UMC's. Since its inception, Adrian Church has been involved with mission and ministry, reaching out beyond its four walls to help with missions in China, helping members grow in their faith and be the church the Lord was leading them to be.

The existing church was renovated and consecrated in 1955. During those years, there was a great deal of participation and leadership from the entire church membership through sermons, discussions, Bible studies, entertainment, and building plans. Membership rose to 168.

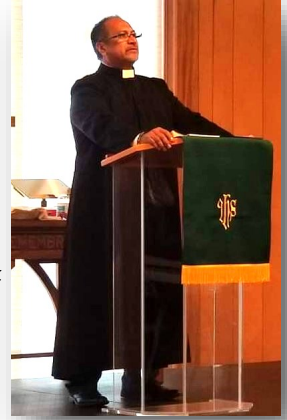
Adrian UMC will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2026.

Cristo en tu Ayuda United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Fred Vanderwerf had a vision for ministry to Hispanic people in the Worthington area. In the latter part of 2020, he asked Frist Church leadership to pray about how that might happen. The leadership did just that and began to look for the reasons to say "Yes!" to supporting a new church start for Hispanic persons.

Since then, Pastor Jose "Angel" Franco and his wife, Lourdes, have been appointed to the Worthington area to begin a new church, reaching out in concern and service to the world by encouraging persons to seek their relationship with God and the world.

With the financial support of the Annual Conference New Church development program, Pastor Angel and Lourdes have seen their congregation come forth from the community. They have connected to the needs of the people: working at the area food shelf, interpreting for clients at Love INC offices, delivering furniture to those families in need, helping persons to update and obtain their immigration status, and distributing food to high school students through a program called Early Meals.



The new Hispanic church is named Cristo en to Ayuda, which means "Christ at your aid". While taking coursed in English and through the course of study program, Pastor Angel has been leading a congregation which averages 25 in worship each Sunday. He and Lourdes lead Bible studies in homes and in the church. At the Annual Conference, Pastor Angel will receive the 2023 Denman Award for Evangelism for Reaching New People. Praise the Lord for Angel and Lourdes!



The Pipe Organ

The first pipe organ was installed in our old church and dedicated during Holy Week services in 1931. The organ cost \$5,000 and was built by the Hinners Organ Company of Pekin, Illinois. Some repairs and changes were made to the organ during the 1950's, and the organ was moved to the present church sanctuary when it was completed in 1963. A new console was added at the time the organ was moved but no other rebuilding was done to the instrument. The mover did propose doubling the size of the organ to better serve the needs of a larger sanctuary, but it was felt the church should be paid for before this was done.



An organ committee was formed in 1977 to determine what alternatives were available for rebuilding, enlarging or replacing the instrument. Dr. Paul Manz was retained as our consultant and after much investigation, it was determined to replace the organ. The new organ was manufactured by the E. H. Holloway Corporation, of Indianapolis, Indiana. This firm has been in the craft of organ building since 1888. The Steward Organ Company of Fairmont, Minnesota, as the area representative, coordinated the installation of the organ.

The new organ is constructed of slider and pallet, electro-pneumatic windchests with 25 ranks of pipes for a total of 1,317 pipes. The pipes are contained in three divisions and controlled by a console of two manuals. The flexibility of design makes the instrument capable of playing all schools of organ literature as well as containing a variety of voices for the regular worship services.

The pipe organ was dedicated on November, 11, 1984. Jolene Kuhl is the current organist at First Church.



First at Work in Missions

Missions at First Church has always been a primary focus for the congregation. Throughout the years, a generous and caring congregation has donated to the following missions: the Manna Food Pantry, the Worthington Christian Church Food Shelf, Love INC, Every Meal program, Emma Norton, English Language Institute in China, the Annual Conference Love Offering, Nobles County Backpack Program, The Banquet in Sioux Falls, the Project Ag Grad Program, New International Life Missions, Love INC Faith & Finance Classes, Minnesota West Pop-Up Food Pantry, The Coat Closet (a Gap Ministry of Love INC), Operation Christmas Child, Our Lady Guadalupe Free Clinic, UMCOR Disaster Response Fund, and a host of other missions and ministries across the globe.

First at Work in Music

First Church has had a long standing tradition of music excellence. A fantastic pipe organ brings music to every service, no matter what time of year. Organists and accompanists have been excellent in playing the instruments of praise. The church continues to be blessed by the Chancel Choir, one of the few churches in the area that still has a choir. In addition, First continues a tradition of supporting a Bell Choir that performs several times a year.



The support of the young people in music has always been present. At a young age, the youth can play bells or chimes during the worship service. String ensembles and brass groups from the Worthington School District will share their talents throughout the year. At various times throughout the years, First Church has had a praise band lifting up the more contemporary Christian music.

First Church is also the rehearsal home for Worthington Area Symphony Orchestra, with several members of the congregation performing in the orchestra. In addition, First Church has also been the traditional location for the performance of the Worthington Area Chamber Singers Annual Christmas Concert. Continuing the theme of supporting the local music opportunities, the church has made room for local piano teacher's student recital performances.

First at Family Life Ministries

During the 2022 year, the church leadership developed a position that focused on family life. This ministry provided women's Bible studies, learning groups for all ages, hosted various family friendly group activities such as the Fall Hay Ride, Halloween party, hot chocolate and cookies after the community holiday parade, hosting Wednesday night meals for families, sponsoring craft events, and a Twins game family outing. This Team is continuing to find ways to connect families to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

First at Work in Cyberspace

First Church began to live stream their worship services six months before the COVID Pandemic paralyzed the world. Because of this, First church was able to negotiate through the difficult waters of no persons in worship. The worship services and other church events are broadcast live on the church website home page, the church's Facebook page, the church's YouTube channel and the Boxcast channel.

First Church had its own app approved by the App Store. Through the app, one could access the church calendar, listen to any sermon message from the archives, watch any worship service from the most recent to several years ago. The app also had a giving feature that allowed one to set up a donation for a regular tithe or a one time gift. Persons could also do these things from the First UMC website, which allowed persons direct access to the most recent worship bulletin or the most current church newsletter.

The church leadership recognized the importance of learning and developing biblical understanding in the fast-paced world of the 2020's. Available to all church members and friends was a resource called RightNow Media Library, which offered thousands of video studies for all ages and all topics. Church members could develop a family routine in their own home using this resource, increasing their understanding of God and one another.

The COVID Pandemic actually assisted First Church in an unusual way. As COVID protocols were in force, the church was waiting for their latest edition of a church directory. The pandemic forced the pictorial directory company to close. As a result, church leadership elected to pursue having their church directory online or available in an app. The program provided all the information needed for anyone with a computer, smartphone or other device. Family information that was normally available in a printed directory was available in that format.

First at Work in Community and the Church

The youth group meets throughout the year, engaging in joint youth events held with other faith communities.

Night Lights Circle provides support and encouragement throughout the year for persons in the church who are home bound, bringing them gift boxes, cards, and flowers.

Celebration of Life Support Teams help persons and families who have lost loved ones by making their celebrations of life stress free and providing comfort and care during those tender moments.

Foundation supports educational scholarships for college students, camperships for persons who would like to attend church camps, supporting the family life ministry through a graduated compensation plan, providing support for family events such as paying for transportation to church sponsored events (Twins Game), providing yearly funds for supporting Love INC as an extension of First Church's ministry to the community, and providing yearly funds to the Missions Team.

Friends of the Sanctuary update the worship space with meaningful décor throughout the various worship seasons.

