

*Asbury Memorial  
United Methodist Church*



**1801 - 2023**



**A HISTORY OF  
ASBURY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
VOLUME 1  
1801-1991  
BY: Merle Buckner, Lois Waldrop, Arlee Banks  
Sketches by: Frances Swanson**

**DEDICATION**

It is impossible to think of the history of Asbury Memorial without the name of Mrs. Lucile Oates coming to mind. Mrs. Oates has served as church historian with faithfulness and great ability for many years. She became active in the church at an early age and has given of herself tirelessly. Through the years she has been an enthusiastic leader, serving in many offices.

Miss Lucile Ralston became the bride of Luther Oates in a 1920 home ceremony. Through the long years of their marriage, both were faithful in their Christian service to the church and community.

Volunteer service has been a way of life with Mrs. Oates. She was a Red Cross Volunteer during World War I. Over the years she has accumulated more than 10,000 hours of volunteer service to Memorial Mission Hospital. Mrs. Oates was one of the first women in this area to drive. Since 1923 she has traveled many miles serving her church, neighbors and community. She continues to use her car as a ministry to her fellow man.

Denied the privilege of voting as a young lady, Mrs. Oates has since taken the right to heart. She knows the candidates and the issues. She can be found working (an eighteen-hour day) at the polls every election day.

Mrs. Oates is present at all local church meetings and remains a delegate to the annual conference. She attends each session conscientiously, listens to every speech and returns home with a detailed report of the conference.

Mrs. Oates is a hard working "classy" lady with a keen mind, a great sense of humor, and a genuine love and devotion for her family, her church and her community. It is with deep love, appreciation and admiration that this booklet is dedicated to this faithful servant of God, Lucile Oates.







## ASBURY MEMORIAL CHURCH

A small log cabin in a grove,  
And later one of frame.  
And now a noble house of brick,  
Which bears the founder's name.

Into the log house, one by one,  
The men and women came;  
Though few in number, brave in heart,  
To glorify the Savior's name.

The heavenly Father smiled on them,  
And crowned their efforts with success,  
And verified His promise true:  
"I surely will My people bless."

One hundred years and fifty-two  
Have passed away since then,  
When to that log house in the grove  
The men and women came.

And so today we honor them in  
Prayer, and praise, and song,  
And humbly pray that we, like them,  
May bravely carry on.

By Mrs. Pearle K. Stevens  
October 11, 1953



The history of Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church is the story of a journey which began almost two hundred years ago. The journey was one of hardship, love, endurance and faith.

United Methodism traces its beginning to John Wesley's "Methodist" societies in England, so named because of their methodical and disciplined practices. In the early days, Methodism was purely evangelical and all the preachers were circuit riders. As the founder of Methodism, John Wesley was the foremost circuit rider of all times. On horseback, he traveled the length and breadth of England, preaching to the poor and the downtrodden. As a result, Methodist societies began springing up across the land.

Some of John Wesley's converts made their way to America and brought with them this newfound faith. Societies were established in New York, Philadelphia and Maryland. Wesley announced that "our brethren in America cry out for help. Who will go?" Of the five lay preachers that volunteered, Francis Asbury was one of the two chosen to go.

Francis Asbury left England in 1771 and was destined to be the only missionary Wesley sent to the new world who would remain here. Asbury began what was one of the most difficult and dedicated Christian ministries in America. He traveled over 250,000 miles on horseback and preached 16,500 sermons. Asbury became known as the "Prophet of the Long Road" and it was said that Asbury did for America what Wesley did for England. He rode the circuit up and down the eastern coast through the thirteen colonies, preaching daily.

When the seeds of Methodism were sown in America, the area now known as Beaverdam Valley was a wilderness. Beaverdam is situated approximately five miles north of downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church is located at the corner of Kimberly Avenue and Beaverdam Road, To write an accurate history of Asbury Memorial, it is necessary to study the locale and the people that lived here.

The psalmist of old said "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills..." Immigrants of Irish, English, Scotch, and German descent came to these hills. Many veterans and settlers were issued land grants following the Revolutionary War. Public records reveal numerous land grants in Buncombe County.

Most of the immigrant families embraced the Methodist faith while a few leaned toward the Presbyterian or Episcopal doctrines. They lived in remote settlements with little or no conveniences. However, they were endowed with perseverance and a spirit of self-reliance. They were thrifty, independent, hardworking people who earned their living in various ways. They were farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths and tradespeople. These hearty people cleared the forests, tilled the land, raised pigs, chickens, sheep and cows. Water had to be carried from a well or spring. They heated their homes from fireplaces or wood burning stoves.

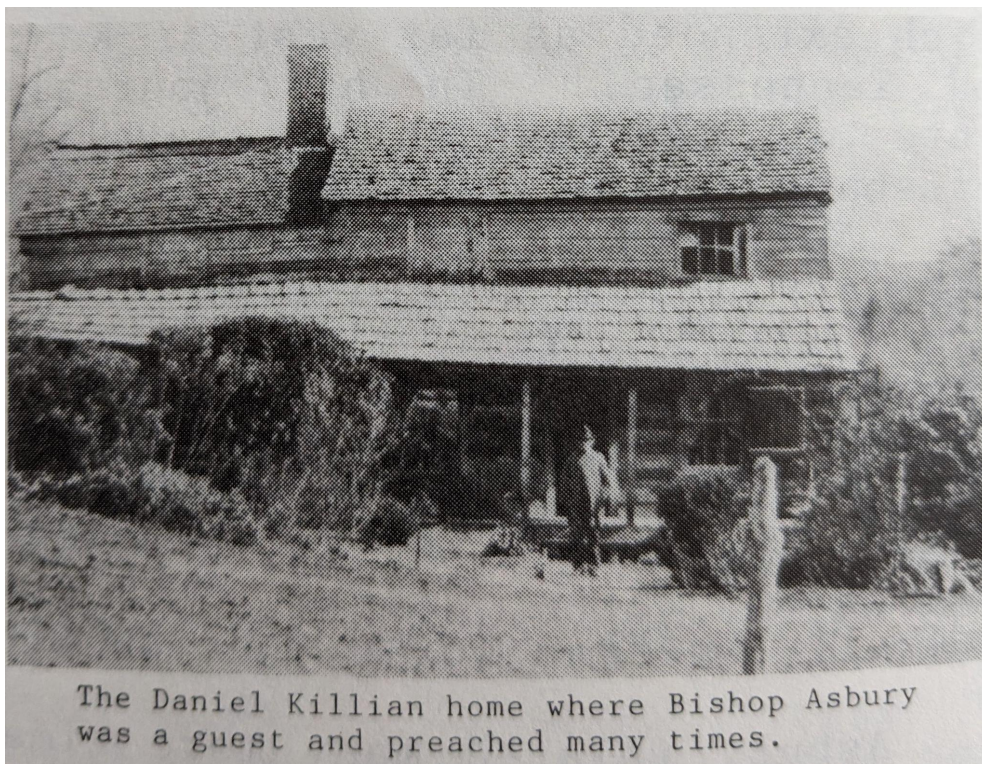
The Beaverdam area was virtually isolated even though two roads had been laid off from Asheville to the head of Beaverdam Creek. It is an exaggeration to call them "roads" as they

remained little more than cattle paths and narrow trails for many years. Travel was extremely difficult and, at times, impossible.

In the year 1800, Bishop Asbury began to include the French Broad Valley in his annual visits throughout the eastern part of the United States which extended as far west as Kentucky and Tennessee. In his journals he wrote of the hardships traveling by horseback in the mountains. In Journal II, November, 1803, he stated: "February 18, I walked down the mountain (Saluda) after riding sixteen or eighteen miles before breakfast, and came in about twelve o'clock to Father John Douthat's: once more I have escaped from filth, fleas, rattlesnakes, hills, mountains, rocks and rivers: farewell, western world, for awhile!"

Asbury related many more times in his journals the difficulty he had riding horseback over the rough terrain of the mountains. Nevertheless, he loved the region and the people. In spite of the hardships he encountered, he was so impressed by the religious hunger discovered in the mountains and coves that he traveled the route eight more times in thirteen years. On October 7, 1801, he wrote in his journal: "We made a push for Buncombe County Courthouse - man and beast felt the mighty hills." When he first came to Buncombe County, he found "societies" of Methodists already holding meetings in various homes.

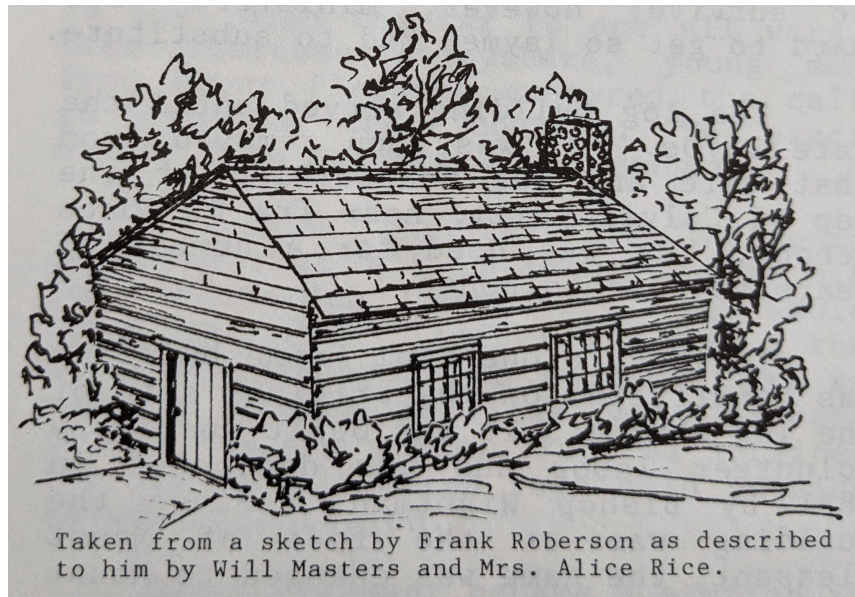
Tobias Gibson, an itinerant preacher who had been meeting with the societies in the area, invited Bishop Asbury to visit a meeting to be held at the home of Daniel Killian who had come to this area in 1793. Killian's home was located on what is now Elk Mountain Scenic Highway, just northwest of the first house on the left.





Concerning this meeting, Bishop Asbury Wrote: "October 11, 1801, Sabbath Day, yesterday and today held quarterly meeting at Daniel Killian's near Buncombe Courthouse. I spoke from Isa. 7:5-7 and I Cor. 7-1. We had some quickenings." Asbury Memorial was officially organized on this date and thus became the mother church of Methodism in Buncombe County.

The need for a meeting place was evident as the years went by. A one room log building was erected and called the Methodist Church on Beaverdam.



In the early 1830s, Daniel Killian donated several acres of land to be used "for a church and burying ground forever." Since Killian received this land as a grant, the building now in use has the distinction of standing on ground that has never been bought or sold. The original deed was drawn on February 1, 1836 and calls for a "certain parcel of ground and the church building thereon." The age of the building at that time is not known.

The years between 1836 and 1861 were a period of slow growth. During the Civil War, the membership dwindled to three women, Mrs. Matilda Palmer, Mrs. Louise Baird and Miss Betsy Garland. At one time, a group of soldiers used the church for shelter.

Following the Civil War this area, as well as the rest of the South, struggled to exist. The church managed to survive; however, ministers were hard to get so laymen had to substitute.

The log building served until the late 1870s. It was then removed from that site and was reassembled at the top of Culvern Hill, near Ira B. Jones School. It was used for a number of years as a schoolhouse.

In 1879, a one room frame building was constructed on the original site of the log church. It was built mostly by volunteer labor and was dedicated in 1881 by Bishop Wightman. Since the

building was at the foot of Mount Pleasant, the name was changed to Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, South.



Mount Pleasant became a member of the Western North Carolina Conference in 1890. The church in its long history has been part of various circuits, including Weaverville, Mills River and the Asheville circuit. In the early part of the present century, Mount Pleasant and Biltmore Methodist formed a two-point circuit.

In April 1917, the United States entered World War I. It was supposed to have been the war to end all wars. Like churches everywhere, young men from Mount Pleasant answered the call to fight for their country. The exact number from Beaverdam is unknown.

In 1918, the terrible influenza epidemic that hit nationwide also hit the Beaverdam community. Whole families were infected with the disease. Because the epidemic was so severe, church services were discontinued for six weeks. Funeral services for the many victims were held outside to avoid contagion.

Mount Pleasant became a station in 1919, Around this time a parsonage was purchased near the church to house the ministers and their families. This house is still standing and is located just southwest of the church.

When the Western North Carolina Railroad line was brought up from Old Fort into semi-isolated Asheville, the area became accessible to the outside world. On October 3, 1880 the first train steamed into Asheville and soon afterward the line was extended into Tennessee.

The year 1880 saw the beginning of a dramatic rise in population for Asheville, as the number of residents doubled from 1880 to 1883. By 1910, the population was nearly 20,000, and in the next fifteen years it more than doubled again.

Even more spectacular than the population growth was the seasonal influx of “summer people” who arrived by rail from May to September. Into the town of 10,000 in 1886 came 30,000 summer visitors, drawn by the mountain splendor and the luxury of the new Battery Park Hotel, built in downtown Asheville that year.

One early guest of the hotel was George W. Vanderbilt who enjoyed the mountain views and mild climate. In 1888 he began buying property, finally acquiring 125,000 acres, on which was erected the incredible “Biltmore House,” a 250-room mansion that opened in 1895.

Biltmore House and the famous persons who came there as guests of the Vanderbilts made Asheville distinguished both nationally and internationally. The town became aware of its image. During the 1890s the downtown was effectively rebuilt in keeping with the city’s new prominence.

On the north side of town, another visitor had begun buying property. Mr. E. W. Grove came to Asheville about 1900 and found the town to his liking. In the shadow of Sunset Mountain he began a residential park, at the center of which was built the mammoth Grove Park Inn in 1913.

Another successful residential park was “Beaver Lake” at the mouth of Beaverdam Valley. In 1923 lots were offered for sale around the sixty-seven acre lake (complete with swimming and weekend boat races) and nearby golf course. By the late 1920s nearly one hundred homes had been built in the park.

The city’s building program was spurred by a concern that Asheville make itself as attractive as possible. In 1925 the city issued bonds for a huge, five-year municipal building program which included a highway tunnel through Beaucatcher Mountain, a civic government center with a city hall and courthouse, road and water projects, a high school, a grammar school, and recreation parks.

When in the midst of the public and private construction explosion, the bottom fell out of the real estate market; banks in the area found themselves in a precarious position. The loans that had been made on the basis of real estate collateral were compromised by the drop in property values. The Central Bank & Trust Company of Asheville found itself holding virtually worthless real estate paper when the speculative bubble burst in 1926. In an effort to remain solvent, the bank persuaded the Buncombe County and Asheville governments to deposit \$6 million in cash in the bank and operate themselves on borrowed money. Finally the Central Bank and Trust Company was unable to hide its bankrupt condition any longer, and on November 19, 1930, it closed its doors.



The city and county governments lost the entire \$6 million in public funds deposited in the bank. The city of Asheville was effectively bankrupt. Soup kitchens were set up on Pack Square to feed the hungry, and lines of those in need stretched down Broadway Street. The depression had arrived.

Mount Pleasant had begun its own building program during the boom. At the second quarterly conference held on March 15, 1927, a building committee was appointed to erect the present structure. The members were Mr. and Mrs. R.C. Stevens, C.L. Felmet, J.A. Roberson, A.T. Allison, Frank Nelson, W. L. Baird, Charles Joyner, S.A. Carter, Mrs. C.A. Rice, and J. P. Masters. Mount Pleasant began tearing down its frame building in order to build the new brick church. First reports were positive as evidenced by Rev. Cox's report to the quarterly conference: "The work of the church has gone forward harmoniously and with encouraging success – we are ready to launch our building program."

On March 4 of the following year the first service was held in the new building. Mrs. Pearle King Stevens, a member of the building committee, suggested changing the name to Asbury Memorial. Her suggestion was approved and the name was officially changed on March 13, 1928 to Asbury Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South.



Two weeks after the collapse of the Central Bank & Trust Company, Asbury Memorial had a building valued at \$50,000, a debt of \$9,500, and contributions that had been choked to a trickle by the economic disaster that had struck the community. Yet at that December 3, 1930 quarterly conference, the difficulty was acknowledged but not bewailed: "Financially, the church is going through trying times," reported the pastor, J. G. Huggins. "Yet, through this feeling of crisis,

there is a definite determination that the church shall continue its service to the community as the year progresses.”

Motivated by love for their church and strengthened by their faith in God, the members of Asbury Memorial struggled to make ends meet. The situation seemed hopeless. The church building no longer belonged to the congregation but was in the hands of the Blue Ridge Building and Loan Association until the balance of the building debt could be paid. The members could do little more than pay the interest on the principal.

There were heroic efforts made through faith: one member mortgaged his home in order to pay on the debt when it seemed the church building might be lost; another member spent countless hours picking blackberries and selling them for one dollar a gallon, so that she could add her hard-earned fifty dollars to the cause. It was a joyful event when a member could scrape together fifty cents to pay toward the loan. By giving nickels and dimes, the congregation kept the church alive.

Finally, on August 31, 1938, Pastor W. H. Groce was able to report to the quarterly conference: “Asbury Memorial Church has much cause for rejoicing over the fact that during the quarter the church property was secured from the Blue Ridge Building & Loan Association for the sum of \$4,000. This was accomplished by a loan of \$3,000 secured from the General Board of Church Extensions, a liberal donation of \$500 from a friend of the church, and \$500 raised within the congregation.”

As the 1940s neared, the church and the nation once again felt the threat of a world war. Pearl Harbor was attacked December 7, 1941 by the Japanese. On December 8, Congress declared war on Japan. Soon thereafter the United States entered the war in Europe. The entire country, including school children, rallied to the country’s defense. It was a period of national unity and of unsurpassed patriotism. Many of those not called to fight left their homes to work in shipyards or defense plants.

One of Asheville’s first war casualties was from the Beaverdam community. The naval merchant ship on which Seaman Second Class Richard Deweese was serving was torpedoed in the Caribbean Sea.

Even though war was uppermost in the minds of the people, the church continued to thrive. When the debt on the church building had been liquidated, a dedicatory service was held on Sunday June 14, 1942. Bishop Clare Purcell made the dedication. Faithful members held the urn while the notes were burned. Rev. Ralph H. Taylor was pastor at this time and several interested Methodist pastors attended.

The war ended August 15, 1945. The final count was 114 from the church and community serving in the military. A total of eight men lost their lives.

In 1946, a patriotic service was held in the chapel at Lake Junaluska honoring all veterans from Western North Carolina. Names of those who served were placed in an Honor and Memory Book which is still on view in the chapel.

Church attendance was affected in 1948 by the onset of a major polio epidemic. At the request of the local health department, all children and young people were kept away from public gatherings, including church services. A young girl from the church was stricken with what, fortunately, proved to be a mild case. She recovered nicely and was very active in the church for a number of years until she married and moved away.

A new brick parsonage located across the street from the church was completed in 1952. Fifty men gave 1500 hours of labor. Also of note in 1952, the church was recognized by the conference for having an attendance of fifty in prayer meetings. The church bell was rung each week when as many as fifty were present.

During the 1950s as families and the church school grew, leaders of the church saw a great need for additional space. Plans were drawn for an educational building to be attached to the present building and facing Kimberly Avenue.

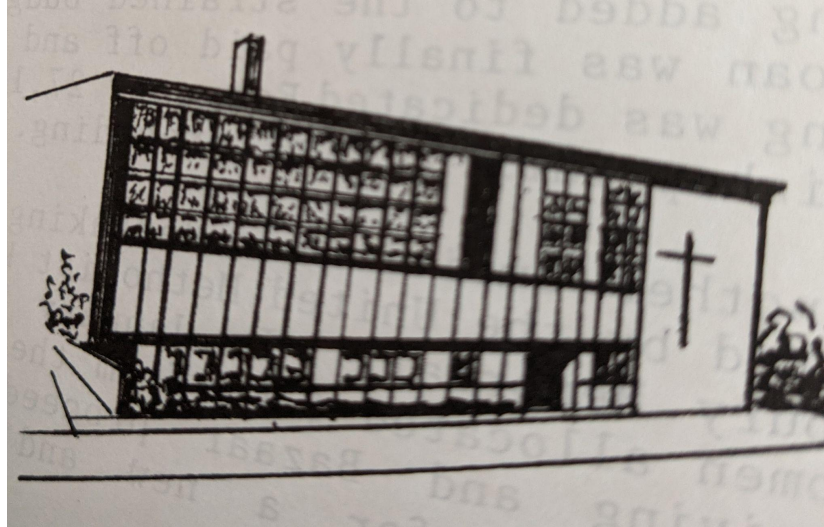
A groundbreaking ceremony for the Educational Building was held after church services on a snowy Easter Sunday in April 1959.



Rev. Thad McDonald, Mrs. Alice Rice, June Bassett, Frank Roberson, Walter Banks

The building, with nine classrooms, the Hugh Brown Chapel, an activity room, and two kitchenettes was constructed and furnished with furniture from Cokesbury. The church school held classes in the new building on November 26, 1961.





The music program at Asbury is exceptional. In 1965, a larger electric organ was installed. The Chancel Choir consistently provides beautiful renditions of both old and new anthems.

A number of improvements were made during the 1960s. Most outstanding was the remodeling of a large classroom for the pastor's study and conference room. This project was accomplished with much volunteer labor and memorial gifts. The study was dedicated October 9, 1966.

In 1968, the Methodist Church united with the Evangelical United Brethren. The name was changed to Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church.

For a decade, Methodist churches over the nation faced a loss of membership and decline of regular attendance. Asbury Memorial was no exception. Records from Administrative Board meetings during this period show great faith, loyalty and determination of the church members who gave hour after hour of service. Many repairs and improvements had to be made to the buildings and the parsonage. The loan on the educational building added to the strained budget. This loan was finally paid off and the building was dedicated February 27, 1972, with Bishop Earl G. Hunt presiding.

Another ambitious undertaking was initiated by the United Methodist Women of Asbury Memorial. In January 1976, the women allocated \$300 from the 1975 Thanksgiving and Bazaar proceeds to start a fund for a new and more adequate kitchen. It was unanimously agreed that it should be a memorial to Mrs. Alice Roberson Rice, whose loving service was an inspiration to her church and community. Two and one-half years later, with the cooperation and hard work of many members, the dream had been realized.

The North Asheville Preschool began operation in 1982. It has provided weekday use of the educational building and has brought many new families to the church. It has the reputation of being one of the best preschools in the Asheville area.

In 1985, it was determined that the parsonage was undesirable. The local electric company built a power plant next door and the increased traffic on Beaverdam Road made the home noisy and the street unsafe. Many repairs were needed and the decision was made to purchase a more suitable parsonage. A house at 2 Audubon Drive was bought on October 7, 1986, and was dedicated March 5, 1989. District Superintendent Jake Golden presided at the note burning ceremony.

In recording a church history, it seems prudent to note events of the times. At the present age, there is not the shortage of money as in previous years. Neither is there a shortage of hard working men, women and children who are dedicated and committed as were our forefathers.

During the 1980s many improvements were needed. Careful planning resulted in the renovation of the sanctuary (including new lighting, upholstering the pews and painting), landscaping the grounds, and reroofing of both buildings. The upstairs classrooms were painted and decorated by individual Sunday School Classes. The children's classrooms in the educational building are very attractive. This is due to the hard work and enthusiasm of the preschool teachers and leaders.

There is a real spirit of cooperation among the various groups of the church. This was demonstrated on the project of remodeling the Fellowship Hall in 1991. When the tremendous job of repairing and reflooring the hall began, the quilters donated money to continue the tile into the kitchen. The Ernestine Buckner Circle gave money toward painting of the Fellowship Hall. The Friendship Circle provided mini blinds and curtains.

Today, many dedicated church members strive to do God's will and are as ready to make sacrifices as the early settlers were. Hard working trustees and their faithful helpers are always present to oversee details of every project, and often do the work themselves.

Leadership within the church is widely dispersed and is of high quality. It is a blessing to have very capable persons to fill the many roles necessary to carry out the programs of the church. Asbury is a concerned congregation with programs emphasizing the uplifting and interacting of all church members. This emphasis carries over into the community in support to the nation and to the world.

Historians have labeled the Methodist Church "the most American of the American churches" – not only because it represents a broad cross-section of American life, but also because it grew up at the same time the young nation was developing and, throughout the years, has tended to reflect American culture like no other denomination.

At the beginning of the history of Asbury Memorial, the problems of the early settlers were those of survival. There were the simple needs of food and shelter, but, most importantly, the need for a deep faith and commitment. Basic human needs are much the same in any decade. The community has progressed from the slow-paced horse and buggy days of 1800 to the accelerated pace of the jet age. Log cabins and farm houses have been replaced by

contemporary-style homes. The cows and sheep no longer graze on the hillside and condominiums have obscured the pasture land. The gentle sound of cowbells has changed to the steady noise of traffic on Beaverdam Road. To many it is questionable that this really is progress.

As we worship in this building today that those who have gone before us worked so hard to provide, let us remember both their sacrifices and their faith. When we find ourselves in difficult times as individuals or as a church, we can know that when we trust in God, and work together, miracles do happen.

“We thank Thee that Thy church  
unsleeping  
While earth rolls onward into  
light  
Through all the world her watch  
is keeping  
And rest not now by day or  
night.”



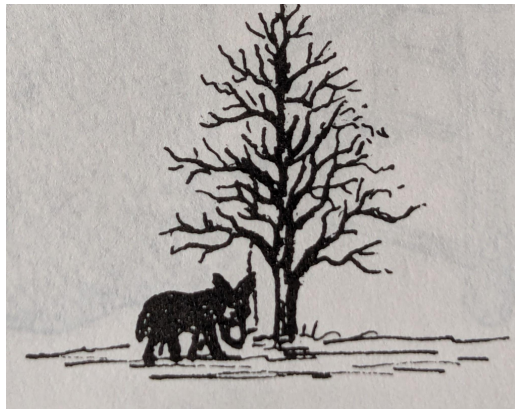
## IN MEMORIAM - THE KITTY TREE

Professor Horace King, Civil War veteran and school teacher, served Mount Pleasant Church as superintendent of Sunday School for forty years. Automobiles were not common in those days so during most of the forty years, the professor's mode of travel was by mule.

The mule's name was Kitty. To school the professor rode Kitty as a saddle steed. To church Kitty pulled a buggy where the reins were always tied to one particular tree in the church yard. The tree became known as Kitty's tree. It was just an oak sapling when the society decided to build the log church. The kitty Tree was there in 1879 when the log church was removed to make room for the frame church. By the time the brick church was built, she was full grown and tall. She provided shade for the homecoming picnics for many years.

Unfortunately, in the late 1970s the tree began to die. It was with great regret that the trustees had to take action. On June 22, 1979, the Kitty Tree fell to a chainsaw. It was a sad time for those witnessing it.

Seasonal flowers have been planted each year around the stump, and a beautiful white birch was planted near the spot where the Kitty Tree once so proudly stood.



## THE ASBURY CHAIR

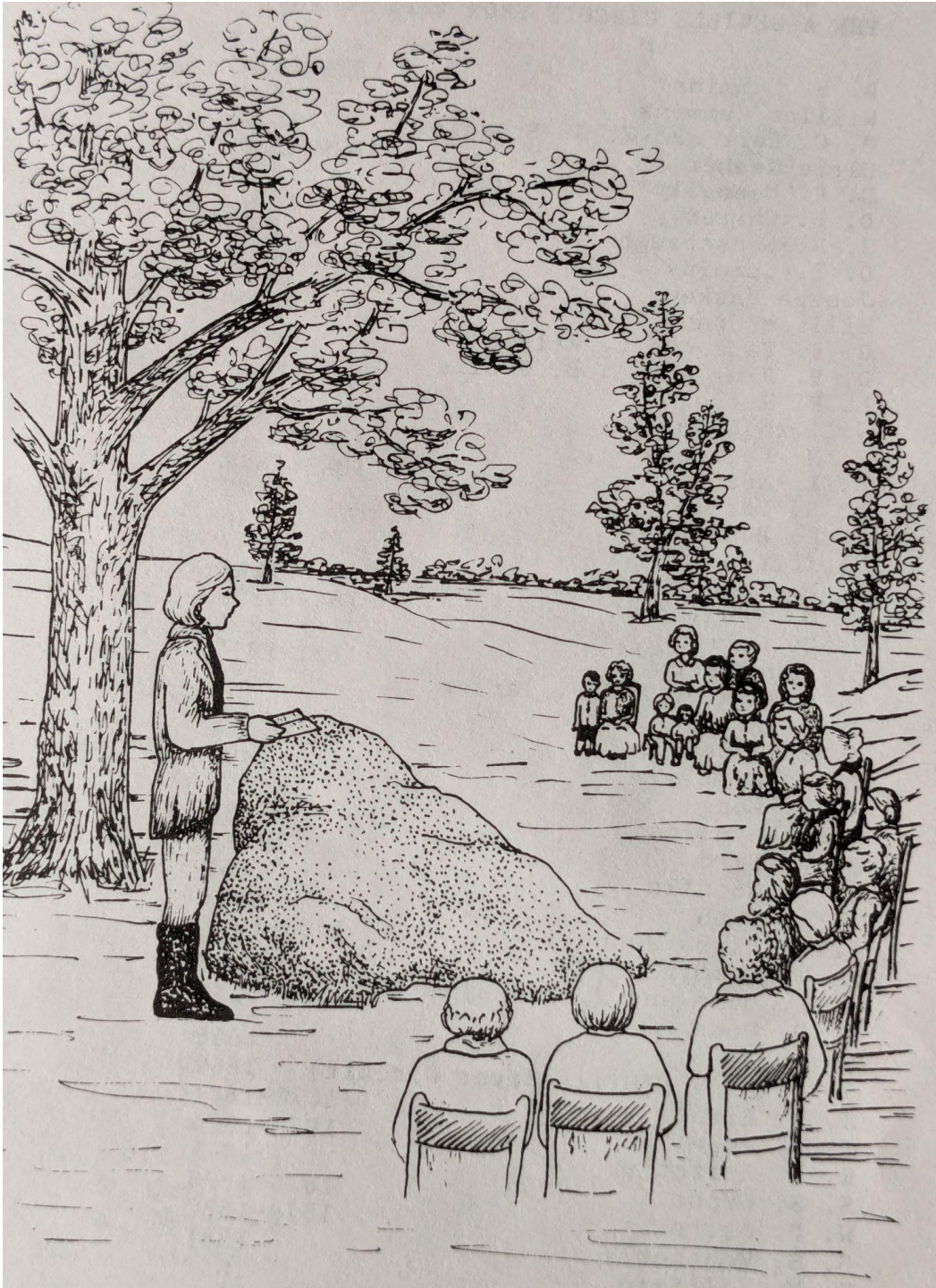
When the present building was dedicated, Misses Julia and Josie Killian presented the church with a chair made by their grandfather, Daniel Killian. The chair was made especially for Bishop Asbury to use when he visited their home. It now sits in a place of honor in the sanctuary.

The chair has suffered with the passing of the years. Visiting preachers carried bits of it away as souvenirs until Mrs. Killian, fearing for the remains, stopped all souvenir gathering. Dan Killian had the back of the chair made high with two elaborate knobs. The knobs were used to top the walking canes of two Methodist ministers and the remainder of the back was converted into other useful reminders of the old bishop's visits.



## THE ASBURY ROCK

A huge rock under an oak tree was the setting of Bishop Asbury's meetings. There is an inscription on the rock that reads: "This rock used as pulpit by Bishop Francis Asbury on visits to Killian's 1800-1813."



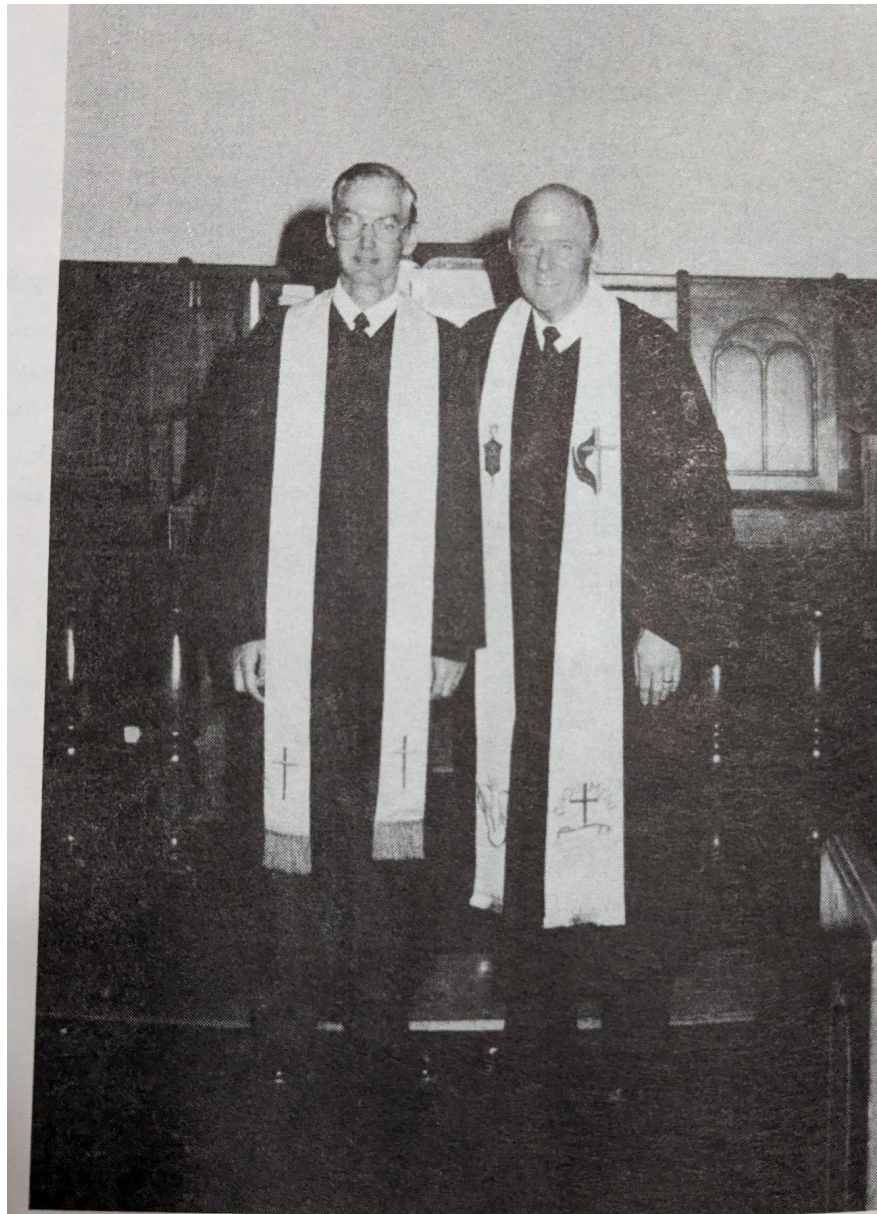


**A LIST OF PREACHERS WHO TRAVELED THE ASHEVILLE CIRCUIT FROM 1825-1897**  
**(List made by Mr. Thad Bassett)**

D.B. Cummins	1825-1826	John Reynolds	1859
William Cummins	1827	J.W. Bird	1860
M.C. Carr and W.G. Brownlow	1828	J.F. Woodfin	1861
Ulric Keener	1829-1830	J.L. Mann	1862
D.R. Meanally	1831	Frank Richardson	1862-1864
D.B. Carter	1832	A.W. Cummins	1865
J.R. Sensabaugh	1833	W.P. Done and J.R. Payne	1866
D.B. Cummins	1834	W.P. Done	1867
Joseph Haskew	1835	L.K. Haynes	1868
William Spann	1836	J.R. Long (Mills River Circuit)	1869
G.F. Page and L. Wilson	1837	J.W. Bird	1870-1871
D.R. Ring and A.B. Broils	1838	T.J. Pope	1872-1874
E.K. Hutsel	1839	R.L. Barton	1875
William Bush	1840	S.S. Grant	1876-1878
F.M. Fanning	1841-1842	W.D. Akers	1879-1880
D.R. Meanally	1843-1844	S.S. Weatherly	1881
A.B. Broils	1845	S.H. Hilliard	1882
J.R. Belemy	1846	Eugene Blake	1883-1884
Ulric Keener	1847	J.F. Wampler	1885-1886
J.M. Goodeykoontz	1848	D.N. York	1887
F.M. Fanning	1849-1850	A.B. Hunter	1888
W.M. Carr	1851	C.M. Green	1889
E. Chuncelmun	1852-1853	W.F. Carver	1890
E.C. Wexler and H. Tarter	1854	J.A. Clark	1891-1892
J.D.F. Jennings	1855	J.H. West	1893-1895
J.C. Hyden	1856	G.G. Harley	1896
J.B. Little	1857	E.J. Poe	1897
J.R. Long	1858		

**MINISTERS**  
**MOUNT PLEASANT/ASBURY MEMORIAL CHURCH FROM 1877-1991**

W.B. Lyda	Oct 1877	M.J. Ervin	1925
S.S. Weatherly	Oct 1878	J.O. Cox	1926
J.R. Payne	Oct 1879	O.J. Chandler	1927
W. B. Lyda	1880-1881	H.G. Allen	1928
W.P. Doane	1882-1883	A.C. Tippet	1929
L.K. Haynes	1884-1885	J.G. Huggins	1930-1932
J.F. Austin	1886-1887	A.P. Rutledge	1933
J.S. Burnett (1 mo.)	1888	T.A. Groce	1934
W.B. Lyda	Nov 1888	W.H. Groce	1936-1938
J.A. Clarke	Oct 1889	Dr. Templeton	1939-1940
J.T. Stover	Oct 1890	R.H. Taylor	1941-1942
T.E. Nagg	Nov 1891-1893	E.W. Needham	1942-1943
L.E. Stacy	1894-1897	C.M. Smith	1943
R.M. Taylor	Dec 1898-1900	E.W. Needham	1946-1947
L.B. Abernathy	Nov 1901-1902	A.C. Kennedy	1948
J.A. Peeler	1903	Miles McLean	1949-1955
T. Wolfe	1904-1905	Thad McDonald	1955-1960
R.A. Parker	1906-1907	LeRoy Scott	1960-1964
G.H. Christenberry	1908-1911	Kenneth Johnson	1964-1967
G.G. Barker	1912	Edgar Price	1967-1970
J.W. Campbell	1913-1915	Norman Pusey	1970-1974
D.P. Proffit	1916-1918	Kenneth Moore	1974-1976
D. Atkins	1919-1920	Robert Lair	1976-1981
H.R. Deal (9 mos.)	1921	Arnold Corriher	1981-1988
Rev. Bevins (3 mos.)	1921	Paul Davenport	1988-1991
J.M. Folger	1921-1924		



Rev. J. Paul Davenport, Pastor and Bishop L. Bevel Jones, who preached here on April 14, 1991.



## EPILOGUE

This history of Asbury Memorial was compiled from church minutes, several well-documented histories, and verified information given to us by people in the community. They are too numerous to mention but, for their information and assistance, we are eternally grateful.

In spite of many hours of research that went into compiling this information, the historical committee is aware that some events of interest may have been omitted. It is our intention to continue to gather data that may be of historical value. If any of the readers have a story, snapshots, anecdote or newspaper clippings that can be shared with the church, please contact the minister or a member of the committee. A scrapbook will be maintained and updated periodically.

It has been said "History is made by those who dare, recorded and preserved by those who care." May we all be listed as those who care.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beaverdam Baptist Church History

Brower, Nancy "Highland Happenings" Column, "It'll Be Like Old Times at Roy Cagle's Tonight." The Asheville Times. June 28, 1974.

Corriher, Arnold D. "Tragedy and Triumph – The Depression Years." Heritage Day Sermon, Asbury Memorial Church, October 29, 1985.

Poplar Springs Baptist Church History

Quick, William K. "A Church That Links the Old and the New" Methodist Christian Advocate. Bicentennial Issue, September 7, 1984, 4-8.

United Methodist Church" Methodist Christian Advocate. Bicentennial Issue, September 7, 1984, 37,38,51.

**A HISTORY OF  
ASBURY MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
VOLUME 2  
1991 - 2023  
BY: J. Canfield**

**DEDICATION**

This volume of our church history is dedicated to our current church historian Rick Morehead. Rick has served as the historian since 2001 and has dedicated himself to learning and enthusiastically sharing our church history whenever given half a chance. Rick was one of the first people I got to know at Asbury and that's probably true for a lot of people as he is hard to miss. On Sunday morning, he stands in front of the altar and rings the bell to start the service with a loud voice (no mike is needed) and a big smile: "Friends, let us prepare our hearts for worship."

Rick has served as the chair of the Worship committee since 2014 and was a member for years before that. In recommending Rick take over as chair, Scott Glenn remarked to Rick, "you do most of the talking anyway. Why don't you take it over?" To this day, Rick said he's not sure if the comment was meant as a compliment or an insult.

Rick was a key player in developing our unique historical Christmas Eve service and he has served as the emcee since its creation. Rick is also the focal point at our Homecoming service, sharing church history and acting as the master of ceremonies there too. After my first homecoming, I asked him to give me a tour of the church and I could tell right away how much he enjoyed showing off the artifacts and sharing the rich history of our church. He is a walking, talking encyclopedia of knowledge about our church and we are very lucky to have him.



Rick Morehead at Historical Christmas Eve Service 2022



## **Land Acknowledgement**

When recounting our church history, we have said the church sits on land that was never bought or sold. While this is true, the statement obscures an important truth. The settlers and pioneers were not the first to call this land home. Indigenous people dwelled here before us. Archeological evidence points to human presence going back 12,000 years. As believers in Christ Jesus, we know all people are created by God and are precious in His sight and as Maya Angelou said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better.”

Therefore, we acknowledge that the land on which our church was built was taken from the indigenous people by the colonizers and given to Daniel Killian. He then donated a part of it to be a church and burial ground. We acknowledge that we meet and worship on land which the Tsalaguwetiyi (Cherokee), Miccosukee, and S'atsayaha<sup>1</sup> lived on and cared for for countless generations. We celebrate their past and continuing contributions to the life of this region, realizing that this statement in no way eradicates the violent history surrounding the acquisition of the land and the unjust displacement of its original stewards.

## **Introduction**

Recording the history of our church is vital to forming and maintaining our identity. Our church history enables us to see how far we have come and the determination and dedication of church members. We can trace the through-line of faith over the years and see how God has blessed us. We recall our church family ancestors who went before us and made us into the church we are today. We honor them and their sacrifices by recording their trials and triumphs. We stand on their shoulders. We are inspired by them to lay a good foundation for the coming generations just as they did for us.

## **Persistent Themes**

What makes Asbury special? When church members are asked this question, three themes are repeated over and over. The first is the hospitality of Asbury. The people of Asbury go out of their way to make everyone who comes in the door feel welcome, and treat all fellow worshippers as family. The second is the charity of Asbury. The people of Asbury give generously to support local, regional, and global causes. We truly embody the directive to be Christ's witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The third recurrent theme is the will of Asbury. The people of Asbury have an indefatigable “can-do” spirit that energizes everything they do. These three themes make up the church's culture. New people remark on them. People who have been around longer nod knowingly when they are mentioned.

---

<sup>1</sup> Indigenous peoples on this land obtained from Native Land Digital (Native-Land.ca)

## **A Welcoming Church Family**

Our church excels at making everyone feel at home and included. Members talk fondly about their first visit and how they were greeted and quickly felt at home. The prevailing attitude of church members seems to be once someone steps foot inside the sanctuary, they become part of our church family. As a “newbie” myself, I can testify to the warm welcome I received when I first attended and how quickly I was welcomed to join groups and committees that helped me feel involved and connected with the life of the church.

Years ago, when Elaine Poovey was looking for a new church home in the Asheville area, she went to a different church every Sunday for several months, attending Lutheran, Episcopal and Methodist churches, but none of them quite fit. Upon visiting Asbury, she said she was struck by the warmth and friendliness of the attendees, but dismissed it at first, thinking it would be different when she wasn’t “new.” Instead, the friendliness continued. She was convinced it was sincere, and she soon joined both the church and the choir.

Another great example of Asbury’s welcoming spirit is the way Scott Glenn was treated when he returned after a hiatus of several years. Scott said that on his first Sunday back at Asbury, Ann Perkins, the choir director, “just about hurdled the pews to get to me to ask me to join the choir!”. He was also approached that same day by Lisa Hartzog, the minister at the time, to offer him a choice - he could either be on the Finance Committee or the Worship Committee! In addition, he was invited to join Mark and MaryJo Smith and Fred Sibley to help deliver furniture to newly-housed people that very afternoon. Within a few months, he was asked to lead the youth along with Mardy Murphy.

The affection Asbury attendees have for one another is so obvious it didn’t escape the attention of a two year old Hollis McCumber, Pastor Jeff McCumber’s daughter, who recently expressed happiness about going to Asbury with her simple statement: “I like seeing the people. They love me.”

When talking about friendships forged at our church, one that always seems to come up is the close bond between Walter and Arlee Banks and Wade and Lois Glenn. They became fast friends and were inseparable. Their fellowship didn’t stop at the church door. They vacationed together, usually traveling to Ocean Isle, North Carolina with the youth group. After Walter Banks died, Arlee kept traveling with the Glenns in their motorhome. After Wade passed away, Lois and Arlee “began their decades-long tripping with Christian Tours,” said Lois Glenn’s son, Scott. Arlee’s daughter, Ellen Banks, said she thinks they took every domestic trip offered by the touring company. They went to all 50 states, as well as Germany, Austria, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Mexico. Arlee and Lois always participated in the church talent show and would “dress up” for Hawaiian luaus and square dance evenings. “They were like sisters. But so different,” Scott said, recalling a time when he was a little exasperated with his mom and asked her why she couldn’t be more like Arlee. Lois answered “I don’t want to be like Arlee, she’s too nice.”



Arlee Banks and Lois Glenn

### **Generosity**

A second defining characteristic of Asbury is the dedication we have for helping the community and the world by giving financially and of our time. The beneficiaries of our generosity are varied and numerous when you look back over the years. There are a few that stand out as having enjoyed a decades-long philanthropic relationship with us and that we plan to continue. These are Ira B. Jones Elementary School, Manna Food Bank, Crop Walk and Habitat for Humanity.

To support the elementary school just up the road from us on Kimberly, we collect school supplies and provide Christmas presents to needy children. Many members and members' children and grandchildren attend or have attended there. Manna Food Bank has benefited enormously from Asbury's generosity, according to Kitty Schaller, who is a church member and former director of Manna. We collect money and food throughout the year to give to the organization which helps feed thousands of households in western North Carolina, including in the Qualla Boundary. We got involved with CROP Walk as one of our former pastors, Perry Miller, was involved in organizing the first CROP Walk in Asheville. We're proud of the fact that we usually land near the top of area givers, and the money is used to feed people around the world. We have always sent a Habitat team to help build homes for people in the area as that's such a huge need, and we like the idea of working alongside the eventual homeowners who spend "sweat equity."

Another example of Asbury's dedication to giving is the Room in the Inn or RITI program that benefited homeless women. It was started by three women ministers, one Methodist, one



Episcopalian and one Presbyterian. Madeline Moseley was the champion of this effort for our church and contributed an untold number of hours to ensure its success. This was a demanding ministry that required a large number of volunteers, various resources, and the coordination of multiple tasks. Asbury acted as host to the women for a week three or four times per year for all nineteen years the program was in existence. Mattresses were placed on the floor for the women to sleep on and church members served as “inkeepers,” who also slept on mattresses.



Habitat for Humanity house - Merritt Moseley, Judi and John Harvin, 2019

on the floor. Asbury provided three meals a day but Asbury didn't want to simply meet their basic needs. In typical Asbury fashion, the volunteers wanted the women to feel like guests, so the meals were served on dinnerware, with glasses and silverware, and the volunteers sat and ate dinner with the women and got to know them.

Another example that showcases Asbury's generosity is the bread tin that is used to collect money for a highlighted organization. Former Pastor Bev Gaska began the tradition with

children passing around a bread tin during the service to collect pocket change to be given to a worthy charity, which changes on a monthly basis. Today, the tin sits on a pedestal at the front of the church but the rest is the same. Each month, attendees are told about the selected organization and the good work they do. In response, the church gives \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year to the various organizations. That's a lot of pocket change!

### **Can-Do Spirit**

Everyone at Asbury seems to possess a positivity and enthusiasm for doing what is needed to benefit the church. When difficulties arise, church members rise to the challenge. This can-do spirit was evident in the three faithful women who kept the church going during the Civil War 150 years ago.

Madeline Moseley said she saw this can-do spirit in fellow church members at the church council when she first proposed supporting RITI, all ready with a speech she thought she would need to deliver to convince them. She had hardly begun her talking points, when they said, "Let's do it!" The RITI was quickly adopted as a church ministry and volunteers appeared.

Another example of this spirit is found in the church's response to the COVID pandemic that struck the world in 2020. Many churches were caught flat-footed as they could not hold services in person and had to scramble to find another way to reach members. Asbury was lucky because we had people who were eager to ensure church services continued in the most effective way in ever-changing circumstances.

Welcoming, generous, enthusiastic... These are traits that have marked Asbury's collective personality through the years, and will carry us forward into the future.

## **Church History**

### **1990's**

Like any organization that has existed for a long time, our church has had periods of growth and periods of dwindling numbers. The 1990's were an especially fruitful decade with the number of attendees peaking. Activities and groups offered abounded during this time.

For the musically inclined, there were five different groups to pick from: the adult choir, the children's choir, the bell choir, the Asbury Singers, and the Asbury Stringers. The Asbury Singers were led by Dick Perkins and would visit local retirement homes, bringing music and joy to the residents. The Asbury Stringers, originally also led by Dick Perkins, played bluegrass at services and continues today, though the members and instruments they play have changed over the years.



Asbury Stringers - Merritt Moseley, Gary Tweed, Jerry Stubblefield – circa 2010

The church calendar was filled with many activities as well. These included Wonderful Wednesdays, Fellowship Fridays, a Fall Bazaar, a Thanksgiving dinner (open to the public), and an annual church picnic. A Variety show was held on June 2nd, 1995, showcasing the talents of church members, which seems emblematic of the sorts of things going on at the church in these years. Performers included the Asbury Stringers, the Handbell Choir, the Covenant Singers, the Country Choir, and the Asbury Singers. Elizabeth and Mary Moseley each played the piano and Claire Moseley danced. A Dancing Dragon was also embodied by an anonymous church member.





Talent Show

In 1992, the flower garden by the preschool was dedicated in memory of Elma Duer on November 1st. Elma was a longtime preschool teacher and church member who had died.

An effort was made in 1994 to collect a photo of each of the pastors who had served at Asbury. The effort was rewarded when we were able to create a display in the hall behind the sanctuary with photos of many of our pastors. Now, when a new pastor arrives, we ask for a photo to add to our collection.

In 1996, the parsonage at 2 Audubon Drive was sold for \$140,000 with an additional \$2766 for the furnishings. The pastor at the time, Perry Miller, was residing at the Francis Asbury UM church parsonage with his wife, Karen, who pastored there. As required by church law, the money was placed in a restricted fund for the provision of pastoral housing. Our current pastor, Jeff McCumber, is not the first of Asbury's pastors to be married to a fellow pastor.

The church recognized Ann Perkins in 1997 for having served as organist and choir director for 20 years. Ann was a very gifted musician who was full of energy and life. The church wanted to commission an anthem in her honor for her many years of serving. Connie Kilpatrick put them in touch with noted composer Dale Peterson. Peterson used words from a 7th century hymn and wrote music to create a song for Ann he called "Christ the Foundation."

Ann would go on to lead the music ministry for another 10 years. Choir members recall her dedication to using her musical talents to bless others until her untimely death from a heart attack. On the day she began experiencing pains, she was supposed to play the piano at the hospital. Ever responsible, she called the hospital to let them know she wouldn't be able to play for them before she left for the emergency room.





Ann Perkins

In 1998, Asbury received a trust from H.G. (called “June”) and Ruth Bassett that totaled over \$300,000. The congregation as a whole voted on how to make use of this generous gift. The Bassett’s roots are deep at Asbury. June Bassett was the grandson of Horace King, a schoolteacher in the Beaverdam area who served as the superintendent of Asbury’s Sunday School for 40 years. Horace and his wife, Martha, are buried in the church cemetery. June’s uncle, Robert C. Stevens was the foreman on the construction of our current brick building. Robert’s wife, Pearle Stevens, was the one who initiated the change in our church name from Mt. Pleasant to Asbury Memorial.

1998 was also a time of loss for the church as beloved and longtime attendee Lucille Oates passed away. Lucille was born in 1899 and caught the attention of the church with her unflinching attendance at Sunday School as a child. She was Asbury’s first church historian. The church’s first history booklet was dedicated to her.

As Asbury began its 201st year of existence, a team was formed called the Third Century Team to envision what Asbury’s future should look like. Team members were Elaine Poovey, Toni Tweed, Gene Edwards, Carol Foy, Louise Gaddy, Ann Young, Sandra Rountree, Margo Knight, Don McGearry, Madeline Moseley, David Wiggins, and Perry Miller (pastor). One of the outcomes of this team was the church’s mission statement:

Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church exists to

Inspire Christian discipleship in others and ourselves

Reach out to others in love and service

Create opportunities for personal spiritual growth

Celebrate God's love through worship

Be a creative, supportive fellowship

## **2000's**

The turn of the century began as the last one ended, with the church booming. In 2000, the number of church members was 249, with an average worship attendance of 123. The Senior Adult Ministry was very active. Fun trips to Lake Junaluska for a concert and a summer trip to the Georgia Mountain Fair occurred.

The church helped support Madeline Moseley on her mission trip to Palestine with the Middle East Mission Team. In appreciation, Madeline brought back a nativity scene made of olive wood that the church uses at Christmas.



Olive wood nativity

## **2001 - The Bicentennial Year**

The church's bicentennial year, 2001, was a very active one. In recognition of the milestone, the church paid a production company to produce a video on the history of Asbury. The video, entitled "Forward Through the Ages," was shown to the public at UNC-Asheville. The company made two Beta SP master tapes and 100 VHS copies.

Cynthia Stewart wrote a play called "Eternal Harvest of the Faithful" about Francis Asbury and the church. This was Cynthia's first time writing a play. Cynthia frequented the seldom-used History Room at the UNCA library so often that the library workers "sort of adopted me," she

recalled. The staff would place books and other items they thought might be useful on the table, ready for her arrival. She said she loved learning about the church's namesake.

Asbury wanted to collect 2001 pounds of food for the year 2001 to give to Manna Food Bank. It was decided Asbury would collect cans of tuna, since it has much needed protein. To inspire donations, Merritt and Madeline Moseley performed "One Ton of Tuna," sung to the tune of "Guantanamo," with new lyrics urging donations. This initial drive was wildly successful; Asbury collected a total of 2254 pounds of tuna. Not willing to mess with success, the Moseleys continued to create lyrics to popular songs and perform them each year to kick off the annual Manna Food Drive. And every year, the goal is increased by one pound to match the year. Money is accepted for the annual drive in lieu of cash and each dollar received is counted as the equivalent of a pound of food. As of this writing, Asbury has donated the equivalent of over two thousand pounds of food each year for the last 23 years, resulting in a grand total of over 23 tons of food.

2001 was also the year Rick Morehead took over as church historian from Merle Buckner, who hand-picked her successor. She knew Rick loved history and enjoyed participating in Revolutionary War re-enactments.

Rick took an interest in church artifacts and used his skills as a woodworker to restore them. There was the pulpit from the frame church sitting in the narthex, that had been stained red. Reverend Curtis Goforth and Rick wondered what kind of wood was underneath. So Rick took it home and stripped it and found it was black walnut. He speculates it probably came from local trees. We also have a couple of pews from the frame church that currently sit in the narthex and the hall behind the sanctuary. A small table that sits beside the pew in the hall is also from the frame church and Rick speculates it might have served as the altar. Unfortunately, we do not have any photos of the inside of the frame church.

Rick also spearheaded the effort to restore the oak church pump organ from the 1800's to playing condition that Frank Roberson had rescued from the side of the road. The restoration work was performed by the Klutz Piano Company of Granite Quarry, N.C. The organ has been lovingly played on occasion at church services since the restoration.



Oak Organ from the 1800's

### **2002-2019**

In 2005, a status report on the expenditures from the Bassett Estate trust, received in 1998, show the church used the money for Window Replacement, the Heating System, the Clergy Housing Fund, the Cemetery Grounds Fund, the Stained-Glass Window Project, the 2020 Fund, the Church Organ, the Sound System and the Air Conditioning, and various other items. The church also planned on giving \$10,000 of the funds as Mission Gifts to Hope for the Children of Africa, Palestinian Refugees, and Heifer Project International. The generous gift from the Bassetts certainly did a lot of good.

Rev. Bev Gaska, who served in the early 2000's, had the idea of collecting pocket change from attendees in a bread tin. Children were employed to pass the tin around the congregation.



Sometimes the service would be interrupted with loud clinking noises as the bread tin's contents were accidentally spilled on the floor.



Asbury, 2006

In 2010, after Asbury had supported RITI for 10 years, Madeline Moseley noted the impact the ministry had on the church, writing “We have grown as a people, as a church, and as members of our community. We have made friends with the women and with the volunteers from the other churches. We’ve come to know each other in our own church better. Not all of the women have been easy to deal with or all of the weeks hassle-free, but the benefits definitely outweigh the minuses. Sanctuary has come to mean much more than the space in which we hold a weekly service. It is who we are and what we do.”

In 2012, Asbury was sad to have to cut down two old oak trees on our church property that had been there for over 300 years but were diseased and in danger of falling. Rick Morehead salvaged the wood from the trees. He used this wood to fashion a lectern that rests on top of the pulpit he restored. Both the lectern and pulpit are used today. The Jackson brothers, Don Jr. and Ben, took some of this wood and made the wooden offering plates we use today.

In 2013, the church wanted to make our Christmas Eve service special. Reverend Curtis Goforth proposed a live nativity and putting bales of hay at the altar and having live animals, including horses, cows, and sheep. When he was asked where the animals would be, he proposed having a barn or going to a church member’s barn up the road. Again, the logistics of doing that made it difficult. So it was proposed we instead have a historical service, like from the

1800's as Rick had several outfits from that time period. Curtis researched and found a service John Wesley had created for churches in North America. For that first service, Rick and Mark Smith dressed in period clothing and have done so every year since. A preaching band was obtained for the minister (this was all that was needed to make the black robe look historical).

Over the years, the church has worked to make it more authentic. Rick made sconces to hold candles since they would not have had electric lights. At first, paraffin candles were used, but they left a black mark on the walls so we transitioned to using non-smoking beeswax candles, which is more historically accurate. The church also obtained pew torches and Rick made wooden stands to hold them.

The Historical Christmas Eve Service, as it was called, was immensely popular. Rick recalls having to bring chairs from Fellowship Hall to accommodate the crowds which numbered over 300 for several years until the COVID pandemic.



Christmas at Asbury











Christmas Eve 2023

The Capital Campaign to make improvements to the building and grounds ran from 2016-2018, and had a goal of raising \$300,000. Members were asked to make a pledge commitment for three years. With the successful raising of the money, the church added a parking lot to the south. The south lot included adding handicapped parking and modified the south entrance to add a ramp and widen the entrance to accommodate wheelchairs. A Memorial Garden for the interment of ashes of the deceased was installed, necessitated by the church cemetery running out of space. The bench that had been erected years before to honor the tremendous generosity of the Bassetts was moved to the Memorial Garden.



Dedication of Memorial Garden

In 2019, Asbury became a Reconciling Ministry, under the Reconciling Ministry Network. Reconciling Ministries are committed to LGBTQ inclusion and justice and are a way for local churches to declare their support for LGBTQ persons. Madeline Moseley remembers going to Pastor Curtis Goforth and asking if Asbury could join. He was willing, and it was put forth to the congregation to approve, and they did. A “reconciling statement” was written and has been displayed on the church’s website and in the bulletin ever since. This affiliation drew people to Asbury including Katherine Robinson who was looking for an accepting, inclusive church.

The reconciling statement reads:

This committed congregation of The United Methodist Church welcomes people of every race, nationality, age, sex, socio-economic status, ability, marital status or family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity, previous or no faith experience, those of differing viewpoints. And we are working to move the United Methodist Church as a whole to do the same.

Asbury declares its support for efforts to amend the Book of Discipline to remove language discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation.

### **COVID Pandemic**

No one could foresee the changes that would come about across the world in 2020 when a global pandemic was declared in the spring. Large groups gathering in person including at church services were now threats to public health. Churches had to quickly adapt or lose

contact with their members. Asbury was blessed in that we had people with the technical savvy to help us make the transition to online services. Jason Cipriano called it a “God thing.”

Pastor Kelly Crissman and Gary Tweed knew their way around electronic equipment and Jason Cipriano was experienced in Zoom, as he had been using it at work for years before COVID hit. In addition, the interim music director, Connie Kilpatrick, went the extra mile to ensure the music for the service was up to standard.

Kelly and Jason worked together running cables to set up the cameras and sound system. Gary Tweed made sure the cameras and sound system worked properly and captured everything. Kelly recorded his sermons, and Jason handled Zoom: setting up the meeting, sending invitations, troubleshooting, and switching the camera on and off as needed. Jason said he got to know Kelly very well during this time, and they remain friends to this day. Within a week of being notified we could no longer have in-person services, our online service was up and running, and available to everyone.

The pandemic hit just as Connie was about to substitute as the music director. She stayed at her home in Alabama for the first few weeks and used a device Kelly sent her to record herself playing the piano. Jason incorporated Connie’s piano playing and Kelly’s sermon into the online service.

Although music was part of those initial services, Connie was unsatisfied with the quality, stating, “Zoom was not music-friendly,” so she researched till she found a different recording device. She consulted with her son, Michael, a sound engineer in Virginia, who gave his approval of the device. She then recruited her son to work on the final product, greatly improving the quality.

When Connie came to Asheville, she wanted all possible precautions to be taken to ensure the choir members remained healthy, even though this meant more work for Connie. Men and women practiced and recorded the songs separately to reduce contact, and everyone wore masks, and kept six feet apart. Michael combined the separate recordings into one seamless file. All the surfaces were wiped down after each recording session to reduce contamination. Connie is happy to report that during the height of the pandemic, no one in the choir contracted COVID.





Men's Choir Recording Session - Rick Morehead, Mark Smith, Gordon Jones, Scott Glenn, Merritt Moseley

Connie noted the choir really bonded during this time and were “all in,” and very willing to try whatever was deemed necessary. More proof of Asbury’s can-do spirit!

When the church was able to once again have the service in the sanctuary, people wore masks and practiced social distancing for a long time to prevent the spread of the disease.

Asbury decided to keep up the online presence after the mandate for social distancing ended. The availability of online services means members who are sick or traveling can still attend services virtually. The online audience is usually between 10 and 20 people. The possibility of joining the service remotely is one good thing that came out of the pandemic.

### **2021-2023**

In 2021, Madeline Moseley retired as the Preschool Director after 39 years of service. In her honor, the Education building was named after Madeline. The North Asheville Preschool (NAPS) began when Asbury was asked to take over. Madeline accepted the directorship in 1983 and converted the school to a non-profit corporation, and it has been able to be self-sufficient all these years. At its peak, there were about one hundred children in attendance, from age 10 months to 4 years old. For some, the preschool served as an entry into the church as the families began attending, including the Moreheads, the Youngs, the Milses, and others. Madeline stated the goal was for the parents to feel good about where they left their children, and to exude a “homey” atmosphere, while receiving an early childhood education.



In 2022, Pastor Jeff McCumber re-started the youth program, holding meetings and organizing fun activities until Asbury could hire someone for the task. In 2023, Asbury hired Joanna Capps to be youth leader. Jeff also became a full-time minister at Asbury.

On October 8th, 2023, Asbury held Homecoming and celebrated 222 years of Asbury Memorial's being a beacon of light in the community. Dr. John Boggs, the former superintendent of the Blue Ridge District, was the guest preacher. We enjoyed a pot-luck luncheon after the service.



Homecoming Celebration 2023



Potluck Dinner - Homecoming 2023

### **Conclusion**

Asbury has a rich history, one filled with stories of people of faith, some of whom have passed on to glory. We can say, like the author of Hebrews, that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Let us not grow weary; instead, "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

### **The Church Building**

The main sanctuary building was constructed in 1928 by a local contractor, replacing the one room frame building that had been built in 1879. The structure as originally built remains fundamentally unchanged today. The three story, brick colonial style building has gone through several minor renovations over the years, including upgrades to the steam boiler system, renovations to the kitchen and restrooms, and the change to the south entry mentioned previously. The building was designed by architect James J. Baldwin of St. Petersburg, Florida; he had closed his office in Florida and moved to Asheville.

During construction, architect W. H. Lord of Asheville was commissioned to redesign the sanctuary. His redesign moved the choir from the left hand transept to the chancel area behind the altar and pulpit. The design included a modesty curtain hung on brass posts to enclose the choir. We don't know if this curtain was ever installed.

The first service held in the new building was on March 4th, 1928, with a sermon by the pastor Dr. O. J. Chandler. One of the features of the service was the presentation of the chair made by Daniel Killian for our namesake, Bishop Francis Asbury. The chair was presented by

Julia and Josie Killian, church members and granddaughters of Daniel Killian. The chair is currently displayed in the historical transept, along with the old church organ and other artifacts.

The heating system began as a coal fired boiler, was transitioned to fuel oil, and is now fired by natural gas. The system is a low pressure steam system heating over twenty radiators throughout the structure. Given its age, periodic repairs are often required to keep us warm in the winter. A modern HVAC system was added which cools the sanctuary in warm weather.

An important part of the sanctuary and history is its beautiful stained glass windows, many of which were funded by members. The windows are protected externally with storm windows. The windows have required periodic repair to keep them functional but create a wonderful atmosphere.

**MINISTERS**  
**ASBURY MEMORIAL CHURCH FROM 1992-2023**

Jonathan Golden	1992-1995	J. Curtis Goforth	2012-2019
Perry S. Miller	1995-2003	Kelly Crissman	2019-2020
Beverly E. Gaska	2003-2006	Sallyanne McVay	(6 mos.) 2021-2021
Lisa Hartzog Hannah	2006-2012	Jeff McCumber	2021-

**CHURCH HISTORIANS**

Lucille Ralston Oates

Merle Buckner

Richard Morehead





Quilting Bee from the early 80's - Martha Masters, Edith Davis, Ernestine Buckner, Nell Bagwell, Beth Gilbert, Barbara Davis



United Methodist Women 2017





*Asbury Memorial Clarence Gilbert Sunday School*

Clarence Gilbert Sunday School





Chancel Choir - Christmas 2023





Paul "Champ" Duncan's First Grade Sunday School Class, 1958



Rick Morehead with the pump organ behind to the left and Francis Asbury's chair behind him to the right.