

SHEPHERD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Brief History

Building Our Church

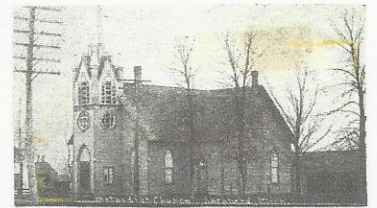
In 1854, the first settlers arrived at Salt River; and in 1855, the Reverend Charles Taylor preached the first sermon there. In 1887 Salt River was nearly destroyed by fire, and the Village of Shepherd was incorporated.

In 1881 the Ladies Aid Society for the Methodist Episcopal Church of the Salt River Charge was organized. The purpose of the organization was to raise money for buying a lot and erecting a church. In fact, the Society bought the first load of lumber used in the building.

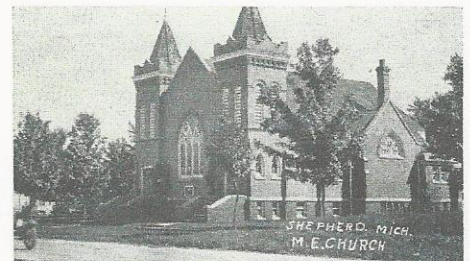
In 1882, a new church for the Methodist Episcopal congregation in Shepherd, under the pastorate of Rev. C. W. Smith, was constructed. The church was located at 140 East Wright Avenue. In 1897, during the pastorate of Rev. David E. Reed, the west wing was added. Both the church and the parsonage at the time were painted yellow, described as Brother Reed's favorite color. However, in spite of the new added space, the growing congregation felt a new and larger building was needed.

To replace the little yellow church, a building committee was formed and in 1909, under the leadership of Bro. Pollok, members contributed 'more money, more hard work, more plans, more patience and more faith'. A gala celebration, including dignitaries from the Masons, was held at the laying of the cornerstone. After that, bricks went up tier after tier, to the windows, and higher to the very top. The dedication ceremony was held on December 19, 1909. The original church had pointed steeples on the two towers. After a few years, the steeples were removed because they did not stand up well to Michigan weather.

The sanctuary was remodeled in 1980 and the Musser Fellowship Hall was built on land donated by Bessie Musser, a long-time Sunday school teacher. During the time the church was being renovated, St. Vincent de Paul allowed the Methodists to worship in the Catholic Church. Pastor Mike Selleck led the consecration service for the renovated church and new Fellowship hall on September 27, 1981.¹



Methodist Episcopal Church
Salt River ~ Shepherd
Michigan
1882 ~ 1909



¹ Jaquith, Charles E. Shepherd, Michigan: A Historical Review, 2002.

Honoring Our Faith Leaders

Over the years, numerous pastors served at the Shepherd United Methodist Church. Following is the roster compiled from church records:

No Date	D. O. Fox	1916	L. L. Dewey
1863	D.M. Garlock	1919	H. W. Ellinger
1866	J. H. Webb	1922	J. W. Broxholm
1872	J. W. Cawthron	1924	Elihu Mayhew
1875	J. Hills/Father Sheldon	1929	Charles J. Kendall
1877	B. D. Wier	1930	Wade S. Phillips
1878	B. D. Searls	1936	Floyd H. Cramer
1880	C. W. Smith	1939	Henry Hulm
1883	Thomas Cayton	1943	George F. Bolitho
1884	A. A. Darling	1946	William Timms
1885	T. Young	1948	Myron Clement
1886	George H. Lockhart	1952	Harold M. Taber
1888	E. L. Sinclair	1958	Lloyd R. VanLente
1891	G. W. Riggs	1964	Lester E. Priest
1892	W. P. Manning	1970	Lee G. Long
1893	D. E. Reed	1971	George Albert Rill
1898	W. W. Aylesworth	1976	Joseph A. Dudley
1900	Elliot Bouck	1979	Micheal L. Selleck
1902	Frank Cookson	1986	Leonard B. Haynes
1904	Louis Blanchett	1992	Donald E. Spachman
1906	C. E. Polok	2004	Wayne Price
1910	Nathan P. Brown	2007	Kathleen S. Kursch
1912	C. E. Davis		

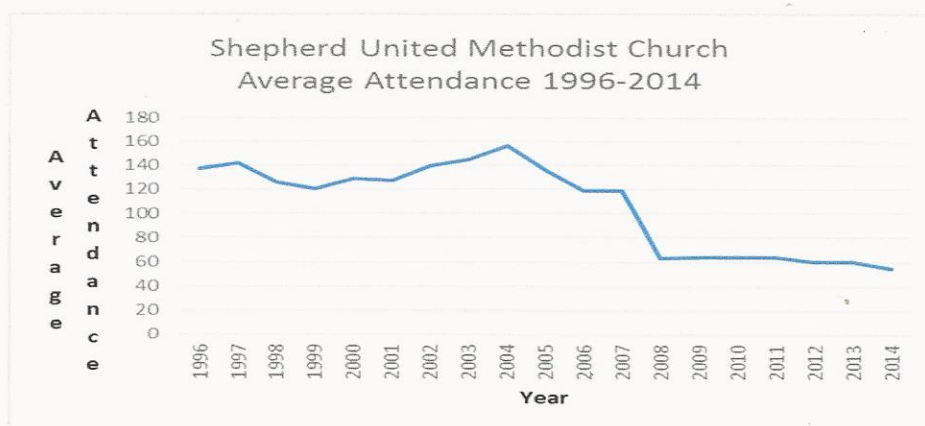
Tracking Attendance Trends

Prior to 1975, several multi-generational families were members of SUMC. In a presentation to United Methodist Women in 1979, Bob Adams noted that “Now (1979) 2nd, 3rd, or later generations are the “old timers.” Between 1975 and 2000, many young families with small children lived in the area; many attended church regularly. The recession caused high unemployment, and those children had to leave the area to seek employment. As a result, that group of children is gone; they will not raise their own children in this church.

In approximately 1982, a devotional service was added to the traditional Sunday worship schedule. The devotional service was held at 8:30 a.m., with an average attendance of about 25. The traditional service continued at 11 a.m.

In 2005, a contemporary service was added. There was much discussion about the time of the service and how best to fit three services, coffee hour, and Sunday school into the Sunday morning time frame. In 2007, the contemporary service was discontinued and in 2010 the devotional service was combined with the traditional service held at 9:30 a.m.

The following chart tracks average attendance at the combined Sunday morning worship services.



The chart shows a sharp drop in attendance during 2008. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the unsuccessful attempt to maintain a contemporary service likely played a role in the drop in attendance. In addition, the rapid growth and lure the mega churches in nearby Mt. Pleasant occurred. Other contributing factors might include the changing culture where churches compete with a multitude of family activities, including, but not limited to, scheduled sporting events for youth, the general aging of the church members, and the current Point of View phenomena (loss of faith) common among the 20 and 30 age group.

Celebrating our History

Through the years, many milestones have been experienced by the members and friends of SUMC. The following very brief paragraphs offer a sampling of but a few which have been gleaned from church archives.

The Shepherd United Methodist Church has undergone several name changes over the years. It was established as the Methodist Episcopal Church, but in 1939 the word Episcopal was dropped as a result of several mergers. The year 1946 saw another change in the denomination as the Evangelical United Brethren Church joined with the Methodists to become the United Methodist Church.

In 1881, the first women's society was organized and called the Ladies Aid Society. Their original purpose was to help raise money for the building of the church. In 1940, the name of the organization was changed to the Women's Society of Christian Service. In 1972, the women's group became known as United Methodist Women.

The original church parsonage was a large frame house on the corner of Third and Maple Streets. In 1957, the parsonage moved to 222 East Cottage. In 1989, the current parsonage was built.

Described as "One of the finest social events of the season," the Methodist Episcopal Church held a homecoming of the Senior Young People's Class. This class was organized in about 1908. Eighty-seven past and present members were on hand that Friday evening, October 30, 1936.

In about 1962, the lighted cross which now hangs at the head of the stairs leading into the sanctuary was gifted to the church by Naomi Grant as a memorial for her parents. The cross originally hung in the First United Methodist Church in Mt. Pleasant, but was no longer needed in their new church built in 1961.

The 45th anniversary of Shepherd Methodist Church was celebrated at a special service on Sunday, December 12, 1954. Pastor Harold Taber and organist Agatha Swenson led the congregation in singing *The Church's One Foundation* and *Blest Be the Tie That Binds*, among others.

In the early 1980's the church leaders began holding monthly smorgasbords where home-cooked meals and fellowship were shared. Proceeds were originally intended to pay off the mortgage incurred from the Fellowship Hall addition and the remodeling. The smorgasbords, after a very brief hiatus, continue, providing funds for missions and projects of all sorts.

Vacation Bible School has taken place for many years. In addition to traditional formats, SUMC has partnered with St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church to offer a community-wide event. The last several years, an every Tuesday for six weeks (Tuesdays Together) format has been in place culminating with a community-wide Back to School Bash where school supplies and Christian entertainment are offered to elementary-age children.

Adult and youth have participated in a variety of work camps, both locally and across the United States for years. Fall, 2014, saw a group of "grandparent campers" travel to Henderson, Kentucky, for a week of service.

Over the years, SUMC has served its congregation and the Shepherd community (and beyond) with a variety of activities including hosting Red Cross blood drives, hosting the Shepherd Rotary Club, facilitating Well-Baby Clinics, and offering Girl Scouts, Boy Scout, 4-H groups, and Senior Meals a place to meet. Celebration dinners for Shepherd Public School athletic teams have been held. SUMC hosted practice sessions for the Maple Syrup Princess pageant. Many other activities, too numerous to mention, have taken place regularly.

With the grace of God, SUMC will have many, many more years to live and grow the mission of the Church.