



## Faith of Our Fathers

125 years of Christian service

First United Methodist Church

of Oroville

1857

1982

## PIONEERS OF RELIGION I

In 1957 Centennial Committee consisting of Jay Partridge, Dorothy Wise, Walter Shaner, Rev. L. W. Reneau and Gladyce Dealey brought together information concerning the early days of the Oroville Methodist Church. This was printed in booklet form January 1957 as part of our "Centennial Observance", and was entitled "Our Heritage - One Hundred Years of Christian Service". All of the following quotations are from that printed account.

"Information taken from "Fifty Years of Methodism", by C. V. Anthony, A.M., D.D., covering the years 1847-1897, indicates that in 1853 Oroville was part of the Plumas Circuit, with headquarters at Bidwell Bar. Elijah Merchant was the pastor. In 1854 Bidwell Bar was the head of the circuit with I. W. Cole acting as pastor. In 1856 Oroville became the head of the circuit under the pastorate of J. W. Burton, with an assistant whose name is not given. In 1857 J. R. Tansey was appointed pastor. It would seem that up to this time, while Methodist work was being carried on in Oroville no organization had been formed.

"We now take you to information secured from our own church records.

"In April, 1932, a celebration was held to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the organization of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Oroville. At this time Fred H. Gray was Historian and prepared a historical record for the occasion, Excerpts from this report will take us up to 1932, when we will have to rely on newspaper clippings that have been kept in scrapbooks by the W.S.C.S., and the memories of members who were at that time part of the local church.

"Quoting from the Historical Record, April 17, 1932: 'In this celebration of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Oroville, which is being observed today, we will review a few of the highlights of history as records are available between 1857 and 1932.'

"As has been heretofore recorded, the First Methodist Church Society was organized by J.R. Tansey in 1857, Conrad Hoover deeded to the trustees of this society, namely: J.J. Cleveland, P.P. Cains, R.C. Gridley, J.R. Wells and Thomas Lytle, the southwest corner of Lincoln and Robinson Streets, for a consideration of \$715.00. Older residents living here in 1857 testify that there was a one-story, four room dwelling on this lot at the time it was secured, by the Methodists.

"On December 23, 1858, the same trustees mortgaged this property to John H. Buckius for \$600.00, with interest at 2-1/2% per month. Also on October 13, 1860, a further mortgage of \$450.00 in favor of Randall Hobart, at the same rate of interest. The county records show that both of these mortgages were satisfied, but on March 13, 1862, the trustees deeded this same property to John J. Buckius for the sum of \$1163. This deed was a result of a court order to the trustees, so the natural supposition is that this transaction was in satisfaction and discharge of the mortgage held by Buckius,

"About this time the Frazier River mining excitement broke out and many of our people left the city, and the depleted, struggling society lost their parsonage property and largely their foothold in the city of Oroville.

"It might be of interest to mention a few of the incidents in connection with attempts made prior to 1857, by a few sturdy pioneer preachers to combat the powers of evil in the then notoriously ungodly community. I have taken extracts from George C. Mans-

field's History of Butte County. It reads: 'There were itinerant preachers in the early days, making periodic visits. In 1849 "Father" Taylor, one of the best known early day divines, a Methodist street preacher, made his way to California. He relates that he preached one morning at Long Bar, (a mining camp a short distance from Oroville). He had a large audience, so, encouraged, he announced an afternoon meeting, expecting a larger meeting, but only about 20 appeared in the audience; the rest had become drunk.'

"In 1850, Rev. S. V. Blakesley rode into camp and asked for a place in which to preach. The only available place appeared to be a gambling house, in which the games were running with \$10,000.00 on the tables. When the men, seated around, discovered the preacher's wish, they stopped the games and listened to the clerical discourse. At the close the hat was passed around and about \$300.00 was deposited therein.

"Judge C.F. Lott told of what he supposed to be the first sermon preached in Butte County. An itinerant preacher, (not named) came to Adamstown (a camp near Long Bar), and received: permission to preach from the hotel porch. About 1,000 men gathered around listening to the discourse. At the conclusion, the hat was passed and a hatful of money and gold dust was taken up!"

"These evidences of regard for things religious, and willingness to listen to the "Old, Old Story", even in a most vicious and unholy environment, indicated that there is a slumbering spark of the Divine Spirit in the worst of us.'

"To continue with the history as found in the record compiled for the seventy-fifth anniversary: '1858 is supposed to have been served by R.R. Stratton, who returned to New York that same year. 1859 has no record of service.'

"In 1860 Randall Hobart was appointed to the Oroville charge, and apparently served two years. We are recently in receipt of a letter dated April 9, 1932, from Mrs. J.T. Foley, in which she says, 'I find no record of the early history of Methodism in your city, only that Randall Hobart, my grandfather, was one of the 49ers of Butte County, arrived at Bidwell Bar in the fall of 1849, Rev. Hobart, for some time, worked with the miners during the day and preached to them on the Sabbath. In 1856 he was Methodist conference itinerant preacher, In 1860 he was preacher in Oroville, and was retired in 1862. He died in 1870. I did not find any record of the church edifice during that time, but as a child I can remember going to church to hear my grandfather preach, both in Oroville and Chico. One of my earliest recollection of grandfather was traveling to Marysville, where he officiated at the Memorial Services for President Lincoln.'

"In 1863 Philetus Grove served Oroville and Forbestown circuit. He was followed by Seneca Jones and John Tamblyn.

The Butte County records show that the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Oroville was incorporated May 14, 1878. In September, 1879, when John W. Kuykendall was appointed as pastor he found a very small membership, all of limited means; also found the town and surrounding country in a financial depression. Only by earnest and persistent effort could we secure by subscription enough to make a beginning on a church building.

"On the evening of the 4th day of April, 1879, the cornerstone for a church was laid at the north-east corner of Bird and Lincoln Streets. The sealing of the cornerstone was delayed until a later date, to include in the enclosure quite a long list of citizens and businessmen, contributors to the building fund. The church was not completed this

year but was used for church services. A disastrous fire swept a portion of the business district, and only by the heroic efforts of the pastor and a few helpers was this church building saved from the fire. During this time John Appleton was minister - from 1880-1883 - and the church was completed.

"There followed quite a number of ministers, most of them here for just a year or two.

"In 1909 George M. Richmond was appointed. He reported finding the church in fair financial and spiritual condition. The little church has served the community since 1879, but was at times taxed above capacity, and becoming inadequate for our future needs.



FIRST METHODIST  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
1879-1910

On December 1, 1909, at a regular Official Board meeting, Bro. V.B. Howe moved, seconded by Fred Irwin, that we proceed to plan for a new church. The motion prevailing, committees were appointed to that end, The question of a location arose. There appeared to be a prevailing, sympathetic feeling of sentiment toward acquiring the property which was lost to the church society by mortgage in 1862, So an option was secured to purchase the southwest corner of Robinson and Lincoln Streets upon which still stood the one-story brick building, used in the first years by this society as a parsonage. This lot 66 x 132 and an additional 6ft. in depth, was purchased for the sum of \$7,000.00. From the church history written by George M. Richmond, pastor in 1910, was taken this comment in regard to the purchase: 'Thus, the old saying was again true, God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. We are then located on the exact spot which our forefathers purchased and lost.'

"Also from the history written by Rev. Richmond, is taken the story of the ground breaking for the new church. 'On April 16, 1910, the Methodists broke ground for their new church and parsonage as they had sold their church and parsonage on Bird and Lincoln Streets. An appropriate program was arranged for the occasion and about this time the old brick house was razed and the brick used for the new parsonage. It is a two-story house of 8 rooms with every modern convenience. The first story is of brick and the second is frame, the whole of it covered with cement and, plaster. The building cost is approximately \$2,700.00.

"The foundation of the new church is now laid. The building is 67 x 16 inches thick. The framework on the basement walls is now being constructed and we are ready for the laying of, our cornerstone tonight at 7 P.M. This is July 8, 1910, and as we write we

can hear the sound of saws and hammers. This may not be as it was when Solomon built his temple, but that is the only way we can accomplish it.

'We are using the old cornerstone in our new structure. We found by leaving an opening in the cement we could double the capacity, hence we are inserting the material taken from the old stone and adding new material. The newspapers within sealed will give you an idea of the men who shouldered the new enterprise. We trust that when this cornerstone is recovered our church will be far in advance of what it is today. We 'are building for you, my dear brothers, sisters, and friends who will be in active service when our poor lisping, stammering tongues lie silent in the grave.'

"During the period of construction the regular religious services were held in the basement. The cost of the building was \$22,000. Presiding at the Dedication March 12, 1911, was Bishop Edwin S. Hughes.

"In 1912 Dr. A.C. Shepherd was appointed to complete the last three months of Bro. Richmond's term, as he resigned to go to Huron, South Dakota. Dr. Shepherd's efforts greatly added to the spiritual uplift of the church, through his personal evangelistic work.



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
1910-1964

'L.W. Wheatley was appointed at the 1914 Conference, serving this church for one year, at which time he went to a larger charge. Upton E. Partridge was sent here in 1915. He served for three years.

"In the meantime the debt of \$10,000.00 at the Dedication had been gradually whittled down to \$3,300.00. In 1917 at an Official Board session Bro. Ames Vaughan suggested that as many persons had purchased Liberty Bonds to help out the government, a movement be inaugurated for a subscription of Liberty Bonds with which to lift at least half of the debt. Bro. Partridge remarked, 'That is a good idea, we will attempt to raise the whole of the debt.' This he accomplished with a contribution of \$250.00 which he and his daughter Nyla had received from the sale of an automobile they had won for getting the largest list of subscriptions for the Oroville Daily Register. \$2,500.00 was paid on the debt in 1918 and the balance paid off the following year.

"S.D. Hutsinpiller served the year beginning September 1918. It was during his administration that a three day Jubilee—Rally-Reception was held celebrating the burning of the church mortgage by Rev. U.E. Partridge.

"The 1919 Conference appointed N.B. Kelly, who was then in France doing duty as Y.M.C.A. secretary. Rev. Guy White, the local Y.M.C.A. secretary and Rev. Mark Hodgson supplied the pulpit until Bro. and Mrs. Kelly arrived. The Kellys stayed seven years.

## Chapter 2 NEW ERA FOR OROVILLE METHODIST

"In 1925 Subscriptions were taken and a contract let for a Reuter pipe organ, which was installed in February 1926, at a cost of \$6,561.00. Alan Bacon of the College of Pacific played the Dedication Concert."

Today the replacement cost would be about ten times the original amount paid. The organ was dismantled and stored with the console when the old church was demolished. They were then installed in the present sanctuary and ready for use in 1966.

Although Mrs. Myrtle Brinkerhoff and Mrs. Hazel Lindholm alternately shared responsibilities at the console, the principal organist was Lola Cochran who served as organist for forty years before retiring in 1971.

"F.H. Petersime was sent by the 1926 Conference, serving for 3 years. His period of service was marked by noticeable advance in the spiritual atmosphere of the church, resulting from his evangelistic preaching of the Gospel. Mrs. Petersime performed excellent service as teacher of the Friendly Band Class."

"In 1929 H.H. Allen was sent to this charge. Both Rev. and Mrs. Allen were strong on looking to the spiritual interests of the rising generation in their several departments. Mrs. Allen adopted the Friendly Band Class, which became a large factor in the Sunday School."

"Rev. David Ralston served the church from 1932-1934, Rev. John Wilkins from 1934-1937 and Rev. Herbert Brooke from 1937-1940. During this period we find in the scrapbooks kept by W.S.C.S. many things of interest - only a few which time or space will permit us to mention."

A spiritual fellowship and Bible Study group of women became a sort of pulse of the church --- they knew who was glad, who was sad, and who was mad, and handled it with prayer. Beulah Chandler was the leader for many years and later Happy Sanford and Anise Blowers took over.

"In 1936 some of our people were mighty happy to burn a mortgage of \$1,050.00, and then in 1937, to burn the final mortgage."

"In 1939, the 82nd anniversary of the church was celebrated, with some of the member's being decorated for their service in the church."

"It is also interesting to note that in 1934, Mrs. Selina Binet, in reviewing early history of our church said, 'Church women should realize that their forefathers had the same financial worries that beset the church group today, and that the early leaders of the church borrowed money to purchase the church lot.'

"One of the most interesting pictures in the scrapbook for this period is the one of the trustees burning the mortgage in 1937, and an insert, taken earlier by Fred Gray, of the old church being moved past the present church, on its way to become an apartment, house on Pine Street."

"In 1940 we bade the Herbert Brooke family God-speed and welcomed the W.S. Woodhulls. The parsonage needed a face-lifting, and so through the efforts of some volunteer painters, and the ingenuity of Mrs. "Woody", it was soon very attractive."

Records do not exist telling of the beginnings of women's work in Oroville, probably soon after the first building was planned in 1879. This organization was called "The Ladies Aid", and that is what

they were for many years, but an early scrapbook refers to only two presidents -- Ida Spicer and Hattie Will. There may have been others among this group of "tireless workers" shown in one of the early pictures --- Belle Ford, Blanche Hogan, Selina Binet, America Vaughan, Edith Cutting, Merry Johnson Watkins, Celia Watkins, Elizabeth Dunstone, Helen Howe, Mary Cochran, Mary Winters, Louise Mills and her mother, Phoebe Cooper.



COPY OF OROVILLE DAILY REGISTER PICTURE - 1910

In 1927 the re-organization of this group must have been quite a jolt to older members. The change was proposed by Mrs. Jay Partridge and followed the format used successfully by the ladies in the neighboring town of Biggs. It bore the name of "Calendar Club" appropriately, because the entire membership was formed into groups bearing the names of the twelve months, these groups to have special responsibilities for that period of time. The membership of 77 adopted the plan and it functioned very well until 1941 under the leadership of nine presidents. In 1940 the national organization of Methodist women took the name of "Women's Society of Christian Service (W.S.C.S.). The local ladies loved the name of Calendar Club so it took them about a year to accept the new name. Finally Rev. Woodhull officiated at the marriage of Mr. Calendar Club and Miss Missionary Society and all was well. The efforts of the women, united and prospered well under the direction of 20 presidents. Again came a name change when on September 22, 1973, the United Methodist Women (U.M.W.) was chartered in Oroville with Eleanor Berryman as president.

In the early 30's the Mother's Club was formed, and many of us who were charter members have seen our children grow to adulthood, and some of the group are now bragging about their grandchildren.

"During the time the Henry Mills' were here the old auditorium was completely remodeled into the beautiful place of worship we now have. Hermie Cochran and his committee envisioned a sanctuary with the center aisle leading right up to the altar, and through the united efforts of all, it came to pass. The new sanctuary was dedicated on April 15, 1946. The cost was \$10,000.00. The pulpit, the two altars, the lectern, and the chancel furnishings were memorials to Edward and Selina Binet, the A.J. Dunstones and the William Almendingers. The baptistry was given by Sylvia Jory Clewe in memory of her mother, Lenore Sophia Jory. Ruth Platzek Moseley gave the offering plates in memory of her husband Jack, who was killed in the war. The cross and candle holders were made possible by the Methodist Youth Fellowship and other donors.

"In 1948 the Petersons came - Ellis, Frances, Jim, Paul and Mary. Marjorie arrived in 1951, and in 1953, when the family was packed and ready to move, here came Mark! During the ministry of Rev. Petersen, several hundred homes were visited, in compliance with a plan in which all the churches in the conference participated. On February 24, 1952, the old regulars had to take to the balconies for the main floor seating was occupied by the 130 new members and the 63 who were baptised."

One of the boys trained in our Sunday School and M.Y.F. decided to go into the ministry. Bill Sanford began his seminary training in 1952 and three years later was assigned to his first church in Paradise.

A ministry to the older folks of the church and community began in the late forties with a monthly luncheon for Senior Citizens. Ruth James was the main—stay of this organization for many years.

During the middle forties, with their eyes on the fine work the women were doing, the men decided to organize, starting with 22 charter members.

Sunday School no doubt was instituted here soon after church services began, but the first of which living members have recollections were in the "new" church on Robinson and Lincoln. In the early 1900's there was a thriving church school, with adequate class rooms and a full corps of teachers. During the pastorate of L.W. Reneau (1953-1957), when the parsonage on Robinson Street was acquired, the church school expanded into the old parsonage and attendance peaked at over 200. This included two adult classes. In the 1960's, along with national trends, the church school here declined in attendance, despite a fine corps of teachers and the best of materials.

"L.W. and Helen Reneau had been here less than a month when we felt that we belonged to them, and they to us. Reneau, a tireless worker, each week with a minimum of clerical help edited and printed THE GOLDEN FEATHER, which brought the news and a helpful message into every home."

At a congregational meeting on October 30, 1955, it was voted to buy a new location for a church ---

6 1/2 acres of oak-dotted land on Acacia Avenue, near the east city limits, also the apartment adjoining the old parsonage. This last to increase the size of our present holdings in order to make the whole more salable, since the old church building was out-grown, needed major repairs, and was rapidly becoming unsafe. The campaign for funds for this venture was carried on with much enthusiasm by a large number of teams of both men and women who set a goal of \$35,000, and got subscriptions for \$45,205. Best of all was the spiritual blessing they received while doing it.

"On May 18, 1957, Helen and Reneau, on the way to a church meeting in Fresno, were struck by a truck, and both sustained serious spinal injuries. Reneau had to go into retired relationship for a time, but from his hospital bed in Sacramento he sent his message of courage and hope to his flock -- as the Reis family came to take over in the parsonage and in our church, as the leaders we so needed. They came to us from Dinuba, that wanted and needed them, because they felt our need was greater."

'Bob and Esther Reis brought inspiration to the church group which resulted in an increased interest in church activities and led to more definite plans for a new building. However, after he underwent heart surgery, from which he never fully recovered, he died in October 1958.

### Chapter 3 THE CHURCH MOVES FORWARD

After the death of Rev. Reis (October 1958) our good District Superintendent, William H. (Ben) Gould, guided the destiny of the Church until Dodds Bunch was appointed in December. He and his wife Millie plus their three boys — Roland, Robert, and Roger — were just the support and tonic needed. Dodds was deeply spiritual and had plenty of know-how in all areas - construction, electrical, communications, photography, music, outdoor life — you name it, he could help — not afraid of work either. Millie too was helpful in every way.

One of the most profitable things of these years were the small groups (usually 5 — 10) which met at odd hours for study and inspiration. In 1960 our Church decided to sponsor a refugee Dutch Indonesian family and help them to get established in this country. On May 27, 1960 Dodds Bunch welcomed Rudy and Ella Messerschmidt and their children - Roland, Olaf, and Christl. The arrangement was a happy and helpful one for all. In due time all joined the church, Rudy obtained a good position with P.G.& E., Ella was the Church's efficient secretary for a number of years, and all of the children graduated from college and secured good positions here and else—where in the U.S.

In 1960 Mary Cochran, mother of Hermie, had the distinction not only of being the member of longest standing in this church, but probably throughout the Conference - 80 years continuing membership and, one must add, regular attendance also every Sunday in her place. Her 90th birthday was observed in a beautiful way on January 24, 1960 with her family as hosts. Over a hundred relatives and old friends were present. Further honor came on June 7, 1963 when Mary was 93. One of her poems, "Take His Hand", set to music by an Ohio Publishing Co., was sung by the choir directed by her son, Herman.

Mary Cochran went to her reward June 5, 1967. The old bell which rang out so many years from the church downtown, now bright and shining, was placed in the narthex of the present sanctuary in her memory by Herman and Lola. Burdette Dealey of Chico mounted the bell on a movable wrought iron platform in memory of his mother, Araminta Dealey. (Also the mother of Catherine Voos and Fred Dealey.) Fred and Gladyce Dealey installed a light above it in memory of Gladyce's mother, Louise Mills, a faithful member and worker in the church since 1915. Here should be mentioned also that Fred and Gladyce were valuable members for many years working in various departments, notably, Fred as head usher and Gladyce using her artistic ability in decorating on many occasions. In 1963 during the pastorate of Dodds Bunch the membership increased to 612. This was due to his efforts, those of a dedicated group of members, and the influx of people during the building of Oroville Dam (1961 - 1967).

From January 1964 to June 1971 the minister was Wayne Williams, His wife Elizabeth, and their daughters Debbie and Karen, fitted well into the work and life of the church. Debbie was married in the sanctuary soon after it was consecrated. Coming here in the middle of a church year and also in the midst of a building project, Wayne did a good job picking up loose ends, bringing to fruition plans for things spiritual as well as cooperating wholeheartedly in the completion of the church and the move from the

old one into the fellowship hall where worship was held until the sanctuary was completed.

During the stay of the Williams,' the parsonage on Robinson Street was sold and the family moved to a more adequate rented property on Morningside Drive.

In 1966 the church membership peaked with 685 members. As has been true throughout the years, attendance averaged about half of the enrollment.

Among the many nice social events of these years was the observance of the 50th wedding anniversary of Will and Thelma Shafer on October 3, 1964, The Shafers were members of this Church since 1920 and responsible for many good things which transpired there, among which was the re—leading of the Gethsemane window and having it brought from the old church building. Their anniversary was like “old home Week“ and many worked to get the new Fellowship Hall finished in time to stage it.

On October 11, 1964, the Fellowship Hall was consecrated at the morning service with the Reverend Shirley Sherrill, Superintendent of Shasta District officiating

During the pastorate of Reverend Williams the younger adults formed a happy fellowship group called the "Togethers" who were true to their name in fostering many nice social events. At times the children were included also.

The older adult social group was called the Tri—M Fellowship (Mr.. Mrs. & Miss). Their monthly potluck followed by a variety of interesting programs attracted many newcomers besides the oldtimers - attendance was 40 - 50. Besides these social events, the members engaged in some money—raising projects that netted hundreds of dollars for church improvement.

This is an appropriate point to pay tribute to Herman Cochran and his wife Lola, who in addition to many other services in the church, led the choir for over thirty years — he as director and she as organist, both with great talent and dedication and with not a penny of remuneration. Much of the time they paid for the music too. It is said that often the choir is the war department of the church, but not so, this one. Hermie with his infinite tact and sense of humor kept everyone in good spirits while they put forth really fine music. On February 25, 1966. several years before they retired, the Church sponsored a big appreciation party for them with were than 200 guests — many from distant places. Gladyce Dealey led in a program entitled “Memories” and a gift of a silver tea and coffee service was presented!

The climax of the Williams' years was the consecration of the sanctuary. (Treated elsewhere under the story of the building.)

Norman Callaway (June 1971 - June 1975),. who succeeded Wayne Williams. was the son of a former District Superintendent - Norman ("Butch") Callaway, Sr. His wife. Ardith, though working full time as an R.N. at the hospital. was a good teammate. The two of them with their children Susan, Ellen, Stephen and Carol, were so outgoing and affable. folks felt immediately as if they had always known them.

The Callaway years were happy Norman was an efficient leader spiritually and socially - specifics of his work are noted in other portions of this history. Here must be noticed his willingness to be of use in every area of the church program; his tact in all situations, his humble, grateful attitudes flavored with genuineness, his musical abilities all of these endeared him to the church members as well as the community. The things said of Norman applied equally well to Ardith.

A much-needed revision of the rolls, begun in the preceding pastorate, plus the loss caused by the completion of the dam, resulted in the shrinkage of the membership to 403 by 1975.

With the completion in 1973 of a modern building near the old round house, the Rescue Mission sponsored by the community became an effective aid for transients, The Methodist Church had charge of one meeting per month. Besides ministers those who served there were Martha Hazeltine, Dorothy Wise, Walter Shaner, Allan Risdon, Eleanor Berryman and others.

Ecumenically the church was allied with the Episcopalian, Catholic, Presbyterian, Congregational and Taylor Memorial congregations, which together sometimes observed Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. At times two or more united for Thanksgiving service and one time for Sunday morning worship with communion,

Some of the Methodist women were active in Church Women United (C.W.U.) in which the above churches were involved. notably Octavia Irwin, Buelah Chandler, Annabelle Wilcox, Dorothy Sanders, Esther McDonald. Eva Harrington and Dorothy Azevedo

Under several pastors were held Preaching-Mission—Weeks when visiting pastors conducted day and night meetings for spiritual emphasis. Missionary emphasis was afforded by visits from missionaries on furloughs.

During these years many-money-raising events supplemented other income; hamburger feeds, catered dinners, rummage and garage sales. Perhaps the most notable of which was the men's turkey dinner given annually for 46 years. Every man in the church contributed his utmost and Hermie Cochran was the organizer and chief cook. This activity was instituted by William Almendinger, long a pillar of the church.

The upkeep of so large a plant used by so many groups became tremendous. Since ready cash was not available, volunteer labor filled the breach. Among those who served devotedly were Ron Bishop. John Fry, Darrel Wimmer, Dick Caborn, George Sweet, Fred Dealey, Bryon Lane and many others, Valiant work was done on the grounds also no money for landscaping. Ron Bishop. with Byron Lane and some other recruits, started the ball rolling by planting the raised area near the sanctuary with donated shrubs and vines - this after much preparation which entailed the moving of some large boulders, putting in a sprinkling system. fertilizing, etc. In deference to Ron, this area has become known as "Bishop's Bump," A big contribution for the church property was the paving of the parking area — half through the generosity of Janet and John Fry, in memory of long time Sunday School Superintendent J. Lindsey Fry and his wife Gertrude. The second half was donated by Albert J. Vaughan in memory of his parents, Amos and America Vaughan. Frank Shipe boosted the project by doing the grading.

Many improvements were made by memorial gifts which cannot be mentioned individually here, with perhaps one exception. Jay Partridge, a dedicated member for many years, gave in memory of family members, the basketball court. a set of movable library shelves, the fireplace in Room M. and the silver communion set. He was a faithful member of the choir, a spiritual beacon and bulwark in many ways, perhaps most of all in his quiet witness.

One of the continuing gifts ever since the present building was completed has been beautiful arrangements on the altar each Sunday morning due to Robert Rogers.

local florist. who has been a member of the church since boyhood days. An added blessing of these flowers is the joy they bring as they are passed on to the sick and shut-ins through the coordination of Dorothy Wise.

The Church family had the happy experience of helping the Callaways celebrate their 25th anniversary on April 20, 1975, with a reception in the Fellowship Hall. The theme of the day was "April Showers Bring May Flowers," and the money gift from the congregation was a shower of silver coins cascading before a floral background. All the appointments were special and included orchids from the greenhouse of John Fry. A solo "on Perfect Love" and an original tribute in verse by "Happy" Sanford highlighted the program.

Shortly after the Callaways arrived they moved to newly purchased parsonage on Rockridge Road.

In 1975 the Cabinet saw fit to transfer the Callaways to another appointment when the membership here wanted very much for them to stay.

#### Chapter 4 THE EVOLUTION OF A BUILDING

In the early 1950's, as the walls of the Lincoln Street building crumbled away and the roof developed numerous leaks, it became evident that action must be taken toward securing a new church home. In 1953 a building committee was appointed and authorized to consider sites for relocation. On October 30, 1955, a special meeting of the entire membership, after considering several locations, voted to buy 6.24 acres of oak and pine-studded land on Acacia Avenue from the William Sanfords for \$12,480.00. The securing of this beautiful property was largely due to the persuasion of Reverend Reneau who would not let the Sanfords say no. At this time the church purchased property adjoining the old parsonage in order to have a larger and hence more saleable holding. The house there was later wrecked. The first campaign for funds was handled alone by the membership working under a committee headed by Hermie Cochran. Other members were Walter Shaner, Jay Partridge, William Chandler, Octavia Irwin, Moulton Gray, "Happy" Sanford, Allan Risdon, and L.W. Reneau. Special credit goes to Will Chandler for his part in this and other early financial campaigns. He was usually in charge of "special gifts" and was instrumental in securing many large contributions. The corps of workers numbered 120 and the goal was \$35,000. The amount subscribed was \$45,205. A happy group of people decided they could proceed in the making of concrete plans. The building committee traveled many miles to visit new church buildings in order to get ideas. Various groups such as the Church School teachers, the M.V.F. leaders, the U.M.W. officers envisioned plans to meet their needs. Bernice Rice and Bertha King planned a kitchen that has been praised by all visitors, as well as the workers who have used it. On March 20, 1957, Architects Rickey and Brooks were engaged and incorporated many partial sketches in their completed plans. The building years encompassed the terms of two ministers - Dodds Bunch and Wayne Williams. Norman Callaway cooperated in working toward the clearing of the debt and the dedication came during the pastorate of John Schmidt. When the new building was still a dream,

Dodds Bunch constructed a miniature representation of the entire plant as it would look on the new site so that the folks knew what they were working for.

Preliminary things such as paying for the land and the Lincoln Street property, architect fees, etc., took their toll of much of the money initially raised. Another sad blow was an assessment of roughly \$10,000 from the city for a sewer to serve the property. The old property did not sell and there was not enough money to hire a contractor. The valiant members decided they would proceed on faith and volunteer labor. The construction of the first unit consisting of offices, rest rooms and three class rooms was approved April 9, 1963. Charles Johnson headed up the crew and practically every able-bodied man of the church did his bit. To name a few, there were Dave Unruh, Clark McElory, Dick Caborn, DeWitt Sanford, Mike Weaver, Fred Dealey, Frank Shipe, Ron Bishop and Darrel Wimmer. Dodds, never afraid to venture, even took down a tree or two operating a tractor!

There were several campaigns for funds - one under the direction of Mortimer Stetson in 1959, and another conducted by William Perry in 1964. Beginning with the construction of phase 2, consisting of additional church school rooms, fellowship hall, fireside room, and kitchen, the work proceeded with William Shafer as contractor and John Partington as building superintendent. This phase was authorized at a quarterly conference on February 18, 1964, and the Fellowship Hall was consecrated on December 11, 1964.

At this time the move from the old church was made and the old building wrecked. but the property was not yet sold. The congregation worshiped in the Fellowship Hall until the completion of the sanctuary in September 1965. The Church was fortunate in having Hermie Cochran with all his financial skill to engineer all the loans. mortgages. etc.. necessary for the realization of so much in so short a time.

On November 16, 1964. the quarterly conference approved plans for the sanctuary and also provision to finance it by a loan of \$205,000 at 6% from the Bank of America. This included a smaller loan which had been made to complete the Fellowship Hall. On January 26, 1965 occurred the groundbreaking for the sanctuary, participated in by Reverend Wayne Williams, John Partington. H.J. Cochran. William Shafer, David Unruh, Charles Johnson, Mike Weaver, Walter Shaner and others.

From the above date, the work on the sanctuary proceeded rapidly under the expert direction of John Partington. There was still much volunteer labor.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
OF OROVILLE - 1965

In September 1965 the sanctuary was completed and ready for the consecration service on the 26th - a really big day of rejoicing with Donald Harvey Tippet preaching. Besides the District Superintendent Ralph York, and the present minister Wayne Williams, participating in the service were former ministers L.W. Reneau and Dodds Bunch who had much to do with earlier stages of

the building. After this service, the next goal was raising the money so that the building could be dedicated free from debt.

In October 1965 a revised agreement with Bank of America set our payment date as January 5, 1966. with final maturity January 5, 1981. Payments amounted to \$1.730 per month. Needless to say it was quite a hassle to meet these monthly obligations but the members responded nobly. The following quote from a special issue of the "Feather," published at the time of dedication, gives some idea of the cost of the Church plant.

"We do not have the figures for the completion of the sanctuary; however. listed below are the figures with an estimate of the sanctuary:

Expended before start of sanctuary	\$164,981.00
Estimated cost of sanctuary	102,982.84
Organ installation	3,000.00
Pews	5,289.00
Chancel furniture	11,600.00
Contractor's fee	500.00
Miscellaneous	2,000.00
Land	12,480.00
Sewer assessment	<u>9,968.99</u>
	\$312,801.83

The years during construction as well as dedication were years of financial stress. Besides special campaigns. annual pledge drives were made during which folks repeatedly increased their giving. but the total never quite met the demands. For 3 years (1976—1979). the Pony Express under the leadership of Allan Risdon proved very valuable. Inflation, too was a problem so that the conference apportionments were not completely met for a number of years.

The climax of many years of sacrificial work came on Sunday, November 18, 1979. when the Church was dedicated. debt-free. Because of the generous gifts of many people, amounting to \$21,000, the loan was liquidated 16 months early - praise the Lord. and all the good folks who helped to make it possible.

The events of the day were skillfully planned by Reverend Schmidt and a fantastic committee. Bishop R. Marvin Stuart preached at the morning service which was followed by a "Planned Potluck" to which all were invited. The boutonnières that morning for our clergy and their spouses were given in memory of those who had worked and helped on the building and are now deceased. They were given by George and Joyce Mosley from Iowa, formerly of this church and who wished to be remembered that day. The flowers were from Robert Rogers Florist. The following is also found in the special edition of the Golden Feather,

"IN MEMORY OF ALL THOSE WHO WERE PART OF THE PLANNING AND WORK BUT WHO DID NOT LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THAT DAY:

Halter Kinney.....Gave the Oleander tree which form a shield between church property and the mobile home court.

Homer Merritt.....Watered the oleanders and helped in many ways.

Charles Johnson.....Chief carpenter for first unit.

David Unruh.....Helped with carpentry and many other ways.

DeWitt Sanford..., . . . . .Helped with grading and cement work.

Clark McElroy. . . . .Did the tile work in the rest room.

Bill and Thelma Shafer....Paid for re-leading the Gethsemane window. Bill was contractor for the building.

Edgar Jones and Son.....Laid the Arizona sandstone walls of the sanctuary.

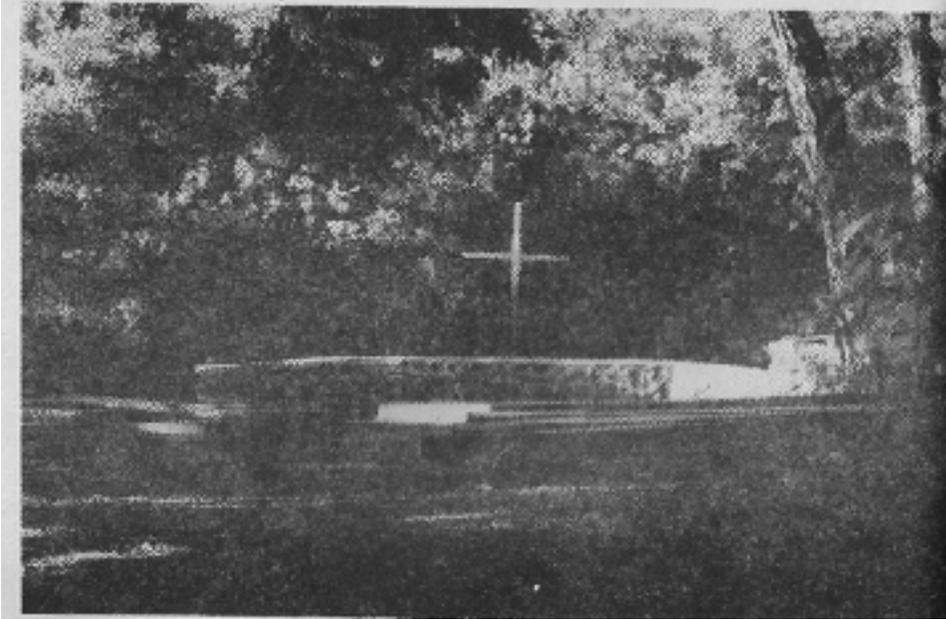
Jay Partridge..... . . . . .Financed the basketball court and fireplace in Room "M". Also helped with many miscellaneous jobs.

Mike Weaver. . . . .Spent many hours "fetching and carrying" and also clearing up.

Following lunch Allan Risdon presented slides showing the many steps in the progress of the building program. Besides the Bishop and Dr. Arthur V. Thurman, District Superintendent, former ministers John Wilkins, Dodds Bunch, Norman Callaway, Mayne Williams and Esther Barney, widow of Robert Reis, came to rejoice and reminisce. During the afternoon service the mortgage was burned with Reverend Schmidt and Herman Cochran in charge. Following this, each minister added a bit to the nostalgia of the hour. The service closed singing "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" and the Doxology.

In 1969 an inspiring outdoor worship center was created on the naturally sloping area near the banks of a small stream at the rear of the main buildings.

The funds for this project had been given in memory of William H. Sanford (1889-1965) at the time of his death by his family and friends even the little congregation in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, who had no building of their own, sent \$25 because they loved the Lord and Bill, Jr., who had been their pastor for three years.



SANFORD MEMORIAL OUTDOO

A number of difficulties had to be surmounted but dedication finally came on June 22, 1969. when William Charles Sanford and other members of the family participated in the service. Since, an artistic stone wall has been added at the rear of the platform and redwoods planted in the surrounding area. These trees have been named in memory of men who helped to develop and maintain it, Two of the redwoods were given in memory of Daisy Johannsen, mother of Wanda Harris. Wanda for a number of years was our lay leader and also chairman of the Cancer Society in which our Church participated. The chapel has been used for early worship during summer months and has been a nice setting for weddings and various fellowship services. Daisy Johannsen's funeral was here also. When all of the present generation are gone, may the redwoods still surround worshippers here and point them heavenward.

#### Chapter 5 YEARS OF PROGRESS - 1975-1982

John Schmidt came to the Oroville Church from a ministry in Sparks Nevada. He had formerly been a minister in the Evangelical United Brethren (E.U.B.) Church and brought a slightly different format to our services. He came to us alone but during his first year he was married to the former Elaine Altenburg at a ceremony during a morning church service, Elaine was a valuable addition to our Church family and her children Rick and Mary Kay were welcomed by the younger set. John's compassion and spiritual insights were inspiring and his extreme friendliness was helpful in attracting people to the Church. Another of his strong points was tirelessness in calling especially at the hospital or other places where there was a crisis of any kind. During his pastorate the old name of Church School Superintendent was supplanted by a Coordinator of

Christian Education with three groups under that leadership - adult coordinator, youth coordinator and children's coordinator. The first group was comprised of a senior adult class and a younger adult group, During the Church School hour there was a babysitter employed so that parents were encouraged to bring all the family and still participate with their own group, There were five classes for children and juniors but the total attendance was usually under 75. The decline in attendance in the last decade is attributed to the lack of dedication on the part of parents who do not seem to give priority to the value of Christian education for their children. Another factor here is probably the fact the Church's growth has been mainly the addition of retired persons who have no minor children. By 1981 there was a slight increase in attendance both here and nationally.

The women's work prospered after the name U.M.W. was adopted in 1973. The society was fortunate in securing the leadership of Elizabeth Leverton in 1979. She was recently from Washington D.C. and was experienced in the work of U.M.W.

Soon after the completion of the Church plant, its use was greatly expanded. A vacation Bible School was conducted each summer which involved several churches. all of which shared the leadership to make it click. In 1980 six churches participated and the attendance reached 160. Each year concern for others was fostered by an offering for world hunger or some similar need.

It was felt that our spacious Church plant should be used more often than once a week. With that in mind, Head Start. federally financed. was housed here since 1970. A State Pre-School has operated also since about the same time. At times there has been an additional—nursery school maintained by the mothers of the children served. One year (1977-78) rooms L and M housed a training school for prospective teachers. This was supported by the High School.

In 1980 a Singles Group for once—married or never—married Christian young people began meeting in our church. This sponsorship was shared by several other churches. About the same time a group of all ages began meeting once a week for square dancing. Brownies and Girl Scouts were furnished meeting places here also.

For several years the men had a prayer breakfast at Thrifty's where they faced spiritual issues.

As soon as the Church debt was liquidated, plans were made for emphasis on program. Since ministerial help had been needed for a long time, June Cole an intern student from Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, was secured. For 9 months (September 1969—June 1981), she served in all departments but with special interest in the youth work. She proved to be a valuable staff addition.

One of the great losses by death in 1980 was that of Walter Shaner who for many years served the church in dozens of ways driving the Sunday School bus in earlier years, serving efficiently as president of Methodist Men, lay leader/ president of Tri—M, superintendent of the Sunday School. financial secretary and others. His memorial gifts were added to the Endowment Fund of the church which will furnish continuing income for the Church budget.

Fond recollections of many of the departed members of the Church live on in our memorial volumes recorded in the beautiful Spencerian of Katie Voos. Generous gifts have been made. some designated, some not, but the books, in appropriate lighted cabinets, are accessible to all in the narthex.

At the annual conference in Sacramento (June 1980), Jack Martinusen was ordained a deacon and appointed associate minister for Oroville, He and his wife Jill were just the help needed here. On June 24, 1981, they welcomed their son William John. Soon after, they bought a home in the vicinity of the church.

Jack Martinusen's leadership of the young people was significant. In the early 1900's that group had been known as the Epworth League and a number of Our present church leaders were influenced by it. Here must be mentioned Octavia Irwin who sponsored it for many years besides teaching the High School class in Sunday School. Later the group changed its name to Methodist Youth Fellowship (M.Y.F.). By the time Jack took over the group it was not large but under his guidance their spiritual growth was amazing

In 1971 the church accepted with regret the retirement of Hermie and Lola Cochran who had served so well for so many years as choir director and organist. The new choir director was Bill Henneker, a High School music teacher. a talented musician adequately trained for the job. Under his direction the choir continued to make the time of worship truly inspirational. Bill also developed a brass ensemble with the talent in his own family.

The present organist, Anise Blowers, came in 1971 with years of experience with church music and native ability which was outstanding. Just hum a few bars of a song and Anise would play it for you in the key of your choice! She is often called upon to play for assemblages at the Conference level. Both Bill and Anise composed music too when required. Joline Sweet was a great substitute at the organ for a number of years. besides her lyric soprano voice was appreciated not only at church services but at weddings and funerals and over a span of years she conducted a junior choir.

The worship services were greatly enhanced in 1979 when Juanita Gray volunteered to play the piano with the organ on Sunday mornings. Juanita is a music teacher and concert pianist of note. She produced harmonies from the old Howard piano that the congregation never thought possible. Folks were uplifted as they enjoyed her talent and that of Anise as they synchronized for preludes, offertories and postludes.

Further enhancement in the music department came in the years 1979-1981 when Significant additions were made to the organ.

On October 21, 1979, an organ concert was presented by Dr. Peter Gibson-Hudson on the occasion of the dedication of two additions to the organ. One, the 4' octave stop with 61 pipes, donated as a memorial to Jay E. Partridge. The donors were his daughters, Beatrice Whear and Lucille Cunningham, his wife Helen and his son-in-law Frank Stone. Mr. Stone also made this as a memorial to his wife, Kathryn Partridge Stone.

Jay Partridge was a long time member of this church and was active in all areas of church life. Some years after his retirement as Butte County Superintendent of Schools, Jay and Helen left Oroville to live in Santa Barbara where he died in 1971.

"The second addition is a 2' Fifteenth stop with 61 pipes and a new windchest donated by Gladys Clark who is an active member of the church, sings in the choir, and serves on the Finance Committee and Administrative Board. (Information taken from Organ Concert Program On October 21, 1979).

Another organ concert was presented April 26, 1981 as two additions to the organ were dedicated. The program was presented by Lucille Vinke and Juanita Gray, One addition is a III Rank Mixture consisting of 183 pipes. windchest and supplementary air supply. This is the second major donation made by Gladys Clark.

An additional augmentation is an 8' Trumpet stop consisting of 61 pipes, windchest and supplementary air supply. This addition has been given by Esther and Allan Risdon as a memorial to their parents. Bertha and Fred Phelps and Richard S. Risdon." (Taken from Organ concert Program on April 26. 1981).

A high point during the Annual Church Meeting on October 13, 1981, was the acceptance of Edmund Metheny, one of our fine M.Y.F. boys, as a candidate for the ministry in the United Methodist Church. The vote to sponsor him was unanimous. Toward the close of 1980, a men's breakfast was instituted for the first Saturday of the month, after which the diners pitched in for maintenance work around the building and grounds.

The charge conference on October 14. 1980, showed all departments in good shape and all bills paid to date. There has been a net increase in membership. The rolls are kept up-to-date each year in accordance with the rules of the Church. In 1980 there was reported to annual conference 354 members. Presently (January 1982) there are 368. Fifty year members of the church in 1982 are: Albert Vaughan, Esther Stollar, Myrtle Guidici, Merle Caborn, Catherine Voos, Lola and Herman Cochran. Fred and Gladys Dealey, Abbie Sanford, Octavia Irwin. and Catherine Brown. In early 1982 the small room, entered from the narthex of the church was refurbished as a prayer room and dedicated to the glory of God as a love gift from the Herman Cochran and Ray Heath families and as a memorial to Jill Kemper. daughter of Jack and Charlene Kemper. We believe that the Founder's Hymn of the Pacific School of Religion should be our prayer. (by John Wright Buchanan)

O God. above the drifting years.  
The shrines our fathers founded stand.  
And where the higher gain appears  
We trace the working of Thy hand.

Out of their tireless prayer and toil  
Emerge the gifts that time has proved.  
And seed laid deep in sacred soil  
Yields harvests rich in lasting good.

The torch to their devotion lent,  
Lightens the dark that round us lies;  
Help us to pass it on unspent.  
Until the dawn lights up the skies...

Fill Thou our hearts with faith like theirs.  
Who served the days they could not see.  
And serve us grace through ampler years.  
To build the Kingdom yet to be.

MINISTERS OF THE  
FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF OROVILLE

1857	J.R. Tansey	1902	H.E. Beeks
1858	R.B. Shelton	1903	Fred Sheldon
1858	No Pastor	1904	J.W. Phelps
1860	Randall Hobart	1907	J.L. Case
1863	Philetus Grove	1909	G.M. Richmond
1874	Seneca Jones	1912	A.C. Sheppard
1877	W.J. Sheean	1914	L.W. Wheatley
1878	John Tamblen	1915	U.E. Partridge
1878	J.W. Kuykendall	1918	S.D. Hutsinpillar
1879	J. Gregory	1919	W.S. Kelley
1880	John Appieton	1926	F.H. Petersime
1883	Jessie Smith	1929	H.H. Allen
1883	N.I. Warren	1932	Dave Ralston
1884	Richard Rodda	1934	John Wilkins
1886	John Kirby	1937	Herbert Brooke
1886	C.H. Beechgood	1940	W.S. Woodhull
1889	J.P. Morris	1944	Henry Mills
1890	F.E. McCallum	1948	Ellis Peterson
1891	A.C. Duncan	1953	L.W. Reneau
1892	Angelo Carroll	1957	Robert G. Reis
1894	D.M. Birmingham	1958	Dodds B. Bunch
1896	C.H. Vliet	1964	Wayne E. Williams
1900	C.H. Beechgood	1971	Norman Callaway
1900	Fred Sheldon	1975	John M. Schmidt
1901	D.W. Chilson	1980	John M. Schmidt and Jack M. Martinusen

On May 10, 1939, three branches of the church became one - (Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Church South and Methodist Protestant Church) at which time they adopted the name — simply, Methodist Church.

In 1968, our Church, having merged with the Evangelical United Brethern Denonination, took on a new name — First United Methodist Church.