

The History of First United Methodist Church – Grapevine, Texas

Pre-Charter: 1854-1865 | **Charter:** 1866

Revised May 15, 2017

In the early 1850's, Reverend E. N. (Nathan) Hudgins brought his family from Alabama and settled in the Birdville area of Tarrant County - later moving to Grapevine. He held worship services and prayer meetings for all denominations in the homes of residents of the area and served as an itinerant circuit-riding preacher with as many as four churches within ten years. He is given credit by some for founding Methodism in Tarrant County, but for certain is the founding father of the Grapevine Charge. In an interview with his daughter, Mrs. Mollie Willis, an account of the actual dialogue of the chartering of the church in 1866 is given as follows:

Rev. Hudgins: "Come right in Brother Smith. This norther blew up and we were afraid you wouldn't get here. A few of our good people have gathered here for this meeting. We are grateful to the Heavenly Father for this day and what it will mean to us." (Brother John C. Smith, the church's first pastor, returned the greeting, set down his grip, and received introductions to Mrs. Hudgins, daughter Mollie, Mary Hudgins, and Mr. and Mrs. Amos Quayle).

Rev. Smith: "I received a letter some days ago from the Elder Brother Hughes telling me that you people in Grapevine felt that you were strong enough in the Lord to have an organized church. Brother Hudgins here has spoken of it often for the past year. He has had the spiritual welfare of your community on his heart and I know that he has talked to the Lord and earnestly desired a church here. And so I have come in the name of the Lord and at the request of those in authority to help begin Methodism in this community. Brother Nathan, how many members are there to start this church?"

Rev. Hudgins: "I have the names of my wife Susan, myself, my daughter Mollie, Brother and Sister Quayle, Brother Philip and Sister Mary Hudgins (Philip could not be here today), and Sister Angelina Starr. She, too, could not be here on account of illness in her home. Not so many, Brother Smith, but you know they make up in quality what they lack in quantity."

Rev. Smith: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be also, you know we are promised, Brother Nathan."

The newly organized church had as its charter members Rev. E. N. and Susan Hudgins, their daughter Mollie, Philip D. Hudgins and his wife Mary, Amos and Mattie Quayle, and Angelina Starr. Angelina's husband, Reverend Daniel Starr, was also an itinerant preacher on the circuit, and therefore, did not place his name on the roll although he attended. Reverend John C. Smith was the first pastor. This congregation met in the E. N. Hudgins home until the first church building was built in 1873 near its present location on land donated by Rev. Hudgins. This building was blown down by a windstorm one evening during a prayer meeting and was rebuilt in 1887.

A roll from Quarterly Conference in 1877 shows the Grapevine Charge with twenty-five members of the conference. This number included the preacher B. H. Bounds, Lay Elder E. N. Hudgins, two deacons, three lay preachers, fifteen stewards, two Sunday School superintendents, J. S. Mullendore and T. Fitch, and trustee J. B. Andrews.

In 1889, accounts were given of work done by the first women's organization, the Parsonage Aid and Home Missionary Society, which held prayer meetings and met the needs of the sick and shut-ins.

A larger church was built in 1900-1901 on the same site. There were three hundred nineteen members being reported in minutes of the Quarterly Conference, with building committee members C. E. Stewart, D. A. Lucas, and J. N. Willis (Mollie Hudgins' husband). A window dedicated to Rev. Hudgins with his portrait in glass was installed in the rear of the sanctuary. This frame building had a bell tower with a large bell.

Around this time the church became interested in missionary work outside the area and on foreign fields. As the women saw the need for more cooperation, they decided in 1910 that the Home and Foreign Missionary Societies would merge into one organization called the Women's Missionary Society. During this time - until the beginning of World War I - attendance at the Grapevine Methodist Episcopal Church South (the official name) averaged sixty to seventy in Sunday morning worship. It is interesting to note that during the years from 1919 to 1928, attendance ranged from sixty to eighty, while during the depression years attendance rose to one hundred without the benefit of population growth.

In 1935, a larger two-story brick church was built on the same site, having a capacity of two hundred fifty in the sanctuary. Stained-glass windows were placed in this building by the families as memorials to their predecessors. The window dedicated to Rev. Hudgins (with his portrait) was moved and re-installed in the rear of the new sanctuary. The bell was housed in an open tower and continued calling worshippers with its toll on Sunday morning. This building served the congregation for thirty-one years. Extensive remodeling occurred in 1951, when air-conditioning and carpeting were installed. It was torn down in 1978.

During the 1930's, the Methodist General Conference voted to merge the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Church North, making the name on the building in Grapevine a statement from history. The stones (from native stones) placed in mortar spelled out "M. E. Church South," denoting the locale as a part of the Confederate cause in the Civil War. This name was designed and made by A. W. Willhoite and his son, W. D. (Ted) Willhoite. This name was removed later when the building was renovated in 1970 to be used as an activities building.

During the 1930's, under the leadership of Sunday School teacher, Max Frank, the young men's class undertook the task of building with their own hands a log cabin-type building between the church building and the parsonage. This was named in honor of former pastor, Rev. L. Pat Leach. This was completed in 1932. Later, this building was moved and donated to the Boy Scouts, making way for the new church building, which was built in 1966 on the site of the old parsonage (at that time being used as Sunday School rooms).

Also during the 1930's, an important tradition was initiated. In 1937, Mrs. Madeleine Hemley, choir director, and Mrs. Starr Frank, pianist, directed the first candle lighting service at Christmas. At that time, adults and children from all churches in the community participated in the service; however, in recent years' only Methodist members participate due to the growth of the congregation. In 1972, under the leadership of Mrs. Gennie McAferty, a Crismon tree was added to the Christmastide and candle lighting services. Hundreds of jeweled decorations of Christian symbols, handmade by families of the church, were added.

The growing needs of the church (580 members) led to the building of an educational wing of classrooms in 1955.

In 1960, a new parsonage was built on West College Street several blocks from the church plant. The John Allen family was the first pastor family to live in the lovely home.

On May 15, 1966, the beautiful new sanctuary was dedicated along with the plant, which included offices, classrooms, a kitchen, parlor, and fellowship hall (named Leach Hall in lieu of the log cabin which had to be moved). Rev. R. A. Brooks was pastor and Bishop Kenneth Pope gave the address.

The new sanctuary was designed for four hundred fifty worshippers (600 members). Abstract design symbols from the Old and New Testaments graced the memorial stained glass windows. Behind the

choir, the window with a Latin Cross and stained glass sunburst is a memorial to former missionary to the Congo, C. T. Schaedel, by his wife (also a former missionary) Etta Schaedel and their daughter Dr. Minnie Lee Lancaster and her husband, Dr. E. L. Lancaster and family. The old E. N. Hudgins window was installed in the new church parlor, which was designed by W. B. Burdines and Lovey Yates.

The Stewardship Tower which graces the courtyard of the sanctuary building is a memorial to E. A. and Leila Baughman, who died before the building was completed.

Church leaders of vision found many weekday uses for the building, including classes for pre-school children under the Head-Start Program for underprivileged children. This program had a twofold purpose: to offer supervised preparation for children beginning their formal education, and to help furnish the children's Sunday School rooms in the education building. The Methodist Pre-School began morning classes in September of 1966, with six five-year-old children enrolled and one teacher. See more about the school's history at the end of this document.

Made possible in part by a substantial gift by Guy and Mozelle Hudson and the balance from the memorial fund, an important ministry of the church was begun in 1969 when a Carillon Chime system was installed atop the church to declare each morning, noon, and evening in chime music the Gospel message to the downtown area of Grapevine. Many other gifts have made large acquisitions possible. One such gift was that of Mrs. Clara Stewart Watson, who bought the McCombs property on the corner of Franklin and Church Streets and donated it to the church. It is at the present time being used as a parking lot. Another parking lot was purchased from the Buckner Family and located on Franklin Street across from the educational building. In 1969, the property on Franklin Street immediately west of the church was purchased and later designated as Parsonage II, a residence for the Assistant in Ministry. The backyard area was utilized as a playground for the pre-school children.

In 1973, the memorial committee purchased a set of handbells in memory of Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Deacon. Mrs. Helen Goodwin organized and directed the first bell choirs in the church. Many invitations for this ministry in remote cities led to the purchase of a church bus in 1973. The church bus is also used by other organizations in the church program. The Memorial Committee also decided to extend a bequest to the church by Marcie and Walter Mayfield to complete the church library, naming it in their honor and dedicating it in 1976.

In the spring of 1978, a few Methodist women met to discuss the possibilities of creating an ongoing mission for the underprivileged in our community. By August 1 with church approval, a Thrift Shop was opened in the toddler two room. The main purpose was to provide clothing for school age children. The shop was open on Fridays from 9:00 - 3:00 p.m.

With clothes generously donated by church members, word of mouth, and a few well-placed signs, the shop was an instant success. As the church grew in membership, the Administrative Board voted to move our youth director into a more modern apartment. This made available the small frame house located in the general area where the Family Life Center now stands. During those years, we were called the "Little Store" by the neighborhood residents. The clothes and customers kept increasing. During its 28 years the Thrift Shop has been housed in five separate buildings. The present Shop is located on College Street.

Our years of ministry have shown that the First United Methodist Church of Grapevine is a caring church. The outreach from our church can make a difference in the lives of some of the people in our community. Man must care for his fellow man and that in doing so we take the first step along the path that Jesus said we must follow.

A new parsonage for senior pastor Dr. James D. Abel was built and consecrated in April of 1983 and dedicated in December 1984. The ground breaking for the Family Life Center was in September 1984 with the consecration service in May 1986. In October 1991, a hip-type roof was installed over the flat roofs of the education building and the sanctuary. Other properties have been purchased on Franklin and College Streets.

A landmark dedication by the Grapevine Historical Society was held on October 23, 1993. This marker is mounted near the bell on the front lawn.

As the church and surrounding community grew, Sunday mornings became overcrowded. The church adapted to those changes by undertaking the construction of a new Sanctuary under the leadership of Dr. Tim Walker. The new building was completed in 2002. The membership as of January 1, 2005 was 1758. We had 10 adult Sunday School classes, in addition to the children's and youth classes (which are separated by age). Average worship attendance was around 900 and average Sunday School attendance was 557.

In 2005, Dr. Ken Diehm was appointed to Grapevine and helped to renew the church's commitment to missions and outreach. Establishing the "Ministry Mile," the church began ministries to meet the needs of people who live right around the church. Subsequently, the church began outreach to the people of Kenya. This new focus on outreach led to "The Villages" concept, in which the church adopted specific "Villages" in different areas of the world. Our first Villages were Ntumburi in Kenya, Las Juntas in Costa Rica, and Shady Oaks Mobile Home Park in Grapevine.

In January of 2007, the church introduced a new Sunday morning schedule, bringing a variety of worship experiences to the church:

- **8:50 a.m. – Traditional Communion Service in Founders Chapel**
This service follows the worship guideline in the United Methodist Hymnal, "An Order of Sunday Worship Using the Basic Pattern," including the service of Holy Communion every Sunday.
- **9:00 a.m. - Contemporary Worship in the Sanctuary**
This service is casual, with contemporary music led by a praise band and vocalists.
- **10:10 a.m. - Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary**
A hymn-based traditional worship service accompanied by the organ.
- **11:15 a.m. - Blended Worship in the Sanctuary**
Blended with both traditional and contemporary music, featuring the Chancel Choir and accompanied by the First Church Orchestra.

In 2008, Rev. Armando Alvarado was appointed as our first bilingual pastor. The church began to focus on adding Hispanic Ministries to the ever-growing outreach of the church. After months of building relationships and trust within the community, a bilingual worship service was started. Over the years since, the Hispanic Ministry has grown to include Bible studies, after-school programs, United Methodist Women and Iron Men groups, musical groups and community outreach programs. First United Methodist Church has become home to Justice for Our Neighbors DFW, a faith-based ministry that seeks to benefit the newcomers in our midst through education, advocacy and legal services.

In 2009, after several years of declining membership and financial challenges, the people of Heritage United Methodist Church (formerly Minter's Chapel) solicited the people of First UMC Grapevine to join together in ministry to the community. After a few months of sharing a charge, the churches merged into one congregation under the banner of First UMC Grapevine. Rev. Louis Carr was appointed to serve as the campus pastor of the congregation, now known as the Heritage Campus of FUMC Grapevine.

In a tragic loss to the church, Dr. Ken Diehm passed away suddenly on February 19, 2011, from complications of previously undiagnosed Leukemia. In addition to the thriving ministries the church already had, the following ministries were created during the time that Ken was pastor: Hispanic Ministries, Angel Wings, Altar Flower Delivery, Health Ministry, Stephen Ministry, Visiting Angels, Cancer Support Group, Be Our Guest neighborhood meal, Blankets of Hope, Feed Our Kids, GRACE Gardens, Handyman on Call, Homeless MAT-ers, Local Mission Days, Project Fun, Project Read, Weekend Food, and The Villages in Kenya, Costa Rica and Grapevine. Membership increased to over 2,500, with an average worship attendance of 1,200.

After a brief interim with one of our former pastors, Dr. J. Eric McKinney, Rev. John Mollet was appointed as the new pastor in June of 2011. For many in the church, the remainder of 2011 and 2012 became a

blur in the wake of the grief over the loss of Dr. Ken Diehm. However, the outreach ministries of the church continued to grow and thrive. The Creative Learning Center saw the retirement of long-time Director Evelyn Urbanosky.

The year 2013 brought on a new vision for focusing on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation. An all-church study of the book *The Great Omission* brought renewed focus.

In April of 2013, the church returned to a simpler Sunday morning schedule, with worship at 8:30 AM in Founders Chapel and 9:45 and 11:00 AM in the Sanctuary. Sunday School was held at 9:45 AM.

Another big change came in May of 2013, when the Creative Learning Center Board was faced with the prospect of losing its Director, Assistant Director and several teachers to job changes, moves and family needs. Under the recommendation of the CLC Board, the Administrative Board voted to close the school and initiate a “rebirthing” process. This process would allow the church to redesign the program in such a way that it could be the most beneficial to the community and the ministry goals of the church. A Preschool Rebirthing Task Force was immediately established and continues its planning work to date.

The season of change continued as Rev. Louis Carr was reappointed in June 2013 to help rebuild Thompson Chapel United Methodist Church in Fort Worth. The Heritage Campus did not receive a full-time appointed pastor as a replacement, and the church began another season of transition. The Heritage Campus Task Force was established to plan for the future of the Heritage facility and its use. At the same time, the Youth Ministry Task Force established the Heritage Campus as the home of their newly-envisioned Sunday evening activities for youth, called #hooked. After several months of experimenting with various pastors filling the pulpit on Sunday mornings, Rev. Rick Mang took over responsibility of Sunday morning activities and pastoral care for the Heritage Campus.

The fall of 2013 brought new excitement for missions and further changes to worship. A mission trip to Prague and Latvia opened new doors for outreach. The result of this trip was the addition of Latvia as the fourth Village ministry. In addition, feedback from the congregation precipitated another change to the Sunday morning worship schedule. A “Coffee & Praise” time was inserted at 9:00 AM, providing a casual atmosphere for those who prefer contemporary worship. The 9:45 AM service was redefined as a traditional service, and the 11:00 AM service continues as a “blended” worship service. Thus, worship returned to much the same schedule as prior to the April 2013 change, only with different times.

In addition, a Building Task Force began meeting to discuss the future needs of our ministries and to develop a “master plan” for future growth.

In 2014, the church continued its focus on service. Under the leadership of the United Methodist Women, we took on a new ministry called “Kids Against Hunger.” In its inaugural year, over 20,000 meals were packaged to alleviate hunger all over the world. The ministry has continued in subsequent years on the national MLK Day of Service, increasing the number of meals packaged each year. The Thrift Shop established a scholarship for high school seniors, named in honor of Dr. Ken Diehm, to be awarded annually based on service activities. Our Boy Scout Troop 700 surpassed 100 Eagle Scouts honored during their rich history. Debbie Price was added to our church staff to coordinate the growing number of Mission Ministries.

The year also saw transitions in the staff leadership of our Children’s and Youth Ministries, as Rev. Nathan Firmin and Jenny Davidson moved on to new chapters in their ministries. These ministries were restructured into a comprehensive focus on Family Ministries under the leadership of Patty Bandy.

After decreasing attendance at the Heritage Campus, the Administrative Board voted to suspend weekly worship services at the Heritage Campus (Formerly Heritage UMC), and a final service was held on October 19.

As 2014 came to a close, the church leadership began to discuss a new focus for the coming year. After a sermon series on the book “My One Word,” the church decided to focus on “one word” for the church.

Our one word for 2015 was “CARING.” With this new focus, we began to recognize church members who were “caught caring” in big and little ways throughout the days and weeks. Caring became a central focus that carried on throughout 2015 and 2016 as well. The church continued its mission trips and outreach to each of the Villages, and even hosted the national gathering of Friends of Latvia, spearheading an effort to bring most of the Latvian Methodist Pastors to Texas for a spiritual renewal retreat. The church also adopted a new safety program, called MinistrySafe, designed to keep children, youth and adults safe while they are involved in church activities.

As summer came, the appointment process saw the move of Rev. Rick Mang to a new church and the addition of Rev. Jenn Pick to our pastoral staff. The Permanent Endowment Fund reached a milestone, meeting their \$1 million goal. In the fall of 2015, the church started a new venture called the Hispanic Ministries Institute. The program invites church leaders from all over the area to come learn more about developing ministries that will attract diverse peoples to the message of the church. We also continued our focus on caring with a series of sermons, seminars and classes focused on mental health.

The year 2016 was a milestone year, as the church celebrated 150 years since its charter back in 1866. A series of events over the course of the year culminated in a grand celebration in October. A cookbook was compiled, full of favorite recipes over the past 150 years of great cooking, and a commemorative Christmas ornament was designed. A series of seminars, called “Winds of Change,” was held to help our congregation members deal with seasons of change in their own lives as well as the life of the church. The church voted to sell the Heritage Campus property, as well as its parsonage, the Thrift Shop, the Forbes House, and two rental houses on Ball Street, in order to help facilitate the master plan presented by the Building Committee. We reached a years-long goal of raising funds to install organ pipes in the Sanctuary, and an inaugural concert was held the weekend of the 150th Anniversary Celebration. The staff also underwent new changes as Dr. Cindy Ryan announced her intent to move to the next stage of life and Rev. Grant Palma was appointed as a new associate pastor.

In the fall, the worship schedule was once again adjusted to allow for a “refresh” of Founders Chapel. Traditional worship services were held at 8:15 and 10:30 AM in the Sanctuary, Sunday School at 9:45 AM, contemporary worship at 10:30 AM in the Family Life Center, and bilingual worship at 11:45 AM in the Sanctuary. The Thrift Shop and Justice For Our Neighbors offices moved into new spaces at the former Grapevine Senior Activity Center, now leased to the church and renamed the Methodist Activity Center (MAC), freeing up the Thrift Shop and Forbes House properties to be sold.

Revised May 15, 2017

PASTORS OF THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Grapevine, Texas

1854-1865	Rev. El Nathan Hudgins (Pre-Charter)
1865-1867	Rev. John C. Smith (At Charter)
1867-1869	Rev. William E. Bates
1869-1870	Rev. J. P. Rogers
1870-1871	Rev. M. C. Blackburn
1871-1872	Rev. S. S. Cobb
1872-1876	Rev. L. M. White
1876-1878	Rev. W. S. May
1878-1880	Rev. L. M. White
1880-1882	Rev. M. H. Cullum
1882-1884	Rev. J. W. Chalk
1884-1885	Rev. H. S. P. Ashby
1885-1886	Rev. J. F. Sherwood
1886-1888	Rev. Ben H. Bounds
1888-1891	Rev. William H. Stephenson
1891-1893	Rev. Samuel Weaver
1893-1894	Rev. H. P. Shrader
1894-1896	Rev. A. T. Culbertson
1896-1900	Rev. W. N. Curry
1900-1901	Rev. M. K. Little
1901-1902	Rev. J. T. Mussett
1902-1904	Rev. M. M. Morphis
1904-1905	Rev. C. B. Smith
1905-1909	Rev. M. S. Leveridge
1909-1910	Rev. I. E. Hightower
1910-1911	Rev. W. H. Harris
1911-1912	Rev. J. T. Bloodworth
1912-1914	Rev. A. J. Ruffner
Dec 1914-1	916 Rev. G. F. Kornegay
1916-1917	Rev. O. C. Swinney
1917-1919	Rev. C. Q. Smith
1919-1923	Rev. C. W. Irvin
1923-1925	Rev. C. O. Hightower
1925-1929	Rev. L. Pat Leach
1929-1930	Rev. F. L. Wilshire
1930-1931	Rev. R. E. Briggs
1931-1932	Rev. L. W. Seymour
1932-1933	Rev. R. E. Nollner
1933-1934	Rev. W. T. Boulware
1934-1937	Rev. J. D. Ramsey
1937-1938	Rev. John Chisolm
1938-1941	Rev. A. W. Franklin
1941-1942	Rev. Jack Whitaker (7 months)
1942-1944	Rev. J. F. Adams
1944-1945	Rev. George Sheare
1945-1950	Rev. Wayne Reynolds
1950-1959	Rev. Ross Smith
Spring 1959	Rev. Sam Mohundro (Interim 3 months)
1959-1961	Rev. John Allen
1961-1963	Rev. John Merritt
Aug 1963-1967	Rev. R. A. Brooks, Jr
1967-1971	Rev. Fred Adams
1971-1972	Rev. John Taylor
Jan 1973-1978	Rev. Bill Goodwin

1978-1979	Rev. Don Kelley
Feb 1979-1987	Dr. James D. Abel
Feb 1987-1990	Rev. Larry M. Van Zile
1990-1993	Dr. J. Eric McKinney
1993-2005	Dr. Timothy C. Walker
2005-2011	Dr. Ken Diehm
Spring 2011	Dr. J. Eric McKinney (Interim)
2011-2017	Rev. John Mollet
2017-	Rev. Jim McClurg

Associate Pastors:

1977-1983	Rev. Gary Kindley
1982-1983	Rev. Ronald Albertson
1983-1987	Rev. James Olney
1987-1989	Rev. Myron Madden
1989-1990	Rev. Nancy York
1990-1994	Rev. Timothy Thomas
1994-1996	Rev. Art Torpy
1996-2004	Dr. Cindy Ryan
1996-2005	Rev. Katie Long
1998-2002	Rev. Charles Graff
1999-2003	Rev. Kissa Hamilton Vaughn
2005-2015	Rev. Rick Mang
2005-2014	Rev. Nathan Firmin
2007-2016	Dr. Cindy Ryan
2008-	Rev. Armando Alvarado
2009-2013	Rev. Louis Carr
2015-2017	Rev. Jennifer Pick
2016-	Rev. Grant Palma

Pastoral appointments before 1942 were effective in November. Those appointments after 1942 were effective in June.

CHURCH BUILDINGS OF THE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Grapevine, Texas

1873	First Church Building
1887	Church Destroyed by Windstorm / Rebuilt
1900-1901	Second Church Building
1909	First Parsonage (Church Street)
1935-1936	Third Church Building
1955	Education Building
1960	College Street Parsonage
1965-1966	Fourth Building (Sanctuary and Classrooms)
1982	Crestview Drive Parsonage
1986	Family Life Center
1992	New Roof on Sanctuary and Education Building
2002	New Sanctuary Completed / Previous Sanctuary renamed "Founders Chapel"
2009	Acquired Heritage Campus and its parsonage through merger with Heritage UMC (formerly Minters Chapel)
2016	Heritage Campus, Heritage Parsonage, Ball Street House all sold (funds to be used for capital improvements and to seed a new church plant)

Originally Compiled by W. D. (Ted) Willhoite | Additions and Edits post-2005 by Melissa Mason

Methodist Pre-School / Creative Learning Center History

The Methodist Pre-School began morning classes in September of 1966, with six five-year-old children enrolled and one teacher. The requests to enroll more children quickly changed this meager beginning. The Methodist Pre-School was then established as a non-profit educational organization available to all children in the Grapevine and surrounding areas. The Pre-School Committee members were selected by the church's Nominating Committee, establishing an important link between the school and the church.

The Pre-School Committee secured certified teachers to insure quality guidance for the children enrolled. Even through the financially lean years, the dedication of the teachers, parents, committee members, and everyone involved provided the highest quality educational program in a Christian atmosphere. The Methodist Pre-School eventually grew to include three-year-old and four-year-old classes along with five-year-old classes. Beginning in 1981, afternoon classes were scheduled to offer the program to more children.

The Methodist Pre-School has, over the years, been a major mission of our church. Also, numerous families have joined the church as a result of their association with the Pre-School. Scholarships have always been available and are a priority of the Pre-School. The Pre-School has provided many useful furnishings in the children's area of the church, such as teaching aids, special workrooms, storage closets, furniture, extra kitchen facilities, playground equipment etc. The expenses of housing the school and facilities used during the school months are off-set by payments to the church each year.

The toddlers, two-year-olds and extended session classes were begun as a separate program in 1979, designed to minister to the community as a Mother's Day Out program. In September of 1986, the Play Day program and Methodist Pre-School program merged to become the First United Methodist Creative Learning Center.

At the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the church and school came to a crossroads in the life of the ministry. A series of changes – including staff resignations and accreditation issues – worked together to create an opportunity for the church to pause, regroup and rebirth this vital ministry. Over the years, many things have changed in the area of preschool education. Accreditation requirements have evolved, curriculum and technology have advanced and facility needs have changed many times over the history of the CLC. During the process of rebirthing this ministry, there are several areas we hope to address. The security of our building, financial needs, learning culture and technology in classrooms are just a few of the areas we hope to improve in order to better serve today's families.

Special thanks and recognition to those who were instrumental in developing this program: Betty Ann Brooks, Frances Fitzgerald, Minnie Lee Lancaster, Balla Wright, Marion Truelove, Nell Elliott, Imoteen Hendrix, Margie Deacon, Annette Lyford, Donna Jordan, Joe Ann Standlee, Dianna Ashman, Margie Viles, Debbie MacElroy, Evelyn Urbanosky.