

## **Ontario United Methodist Church: Celebrating 100 Years**

**(1917 – 2017)**

**From the time between 1822 and 1837, when our early pioneer ancestors gathered to worship in seven log constructed buildings within the area, to the building of a new frame Methodist Episcopal Church in Ontario in 1837, to the combining of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian, and United Presbyterian Church in 1917, the faithful inhabitants of early Ontario were determined to sustain a worshipping community.**

**In addition to the Methodist Episcopal Church, the two other churches located with the small village on Ontario included the Presbyterian (established in 1850) and the United Presbyterian (established in 1851). All three churches were struggling for existence. In 1909, the two Presbyterian Churches merged, but they struggled to fill the pulpit each Sunday with a pastor.**

**In 1915 at the Fall District Conference, the Reverend Alvia Harrison made a motion that the Ontario Methodist Episcopal Church hire a full time minister. (The Ontario Methodist Episcopal Church had previously been part of the Galion circuit, with one pastor serving the Ontario Church as well as the Bloominggrove and Steam Corners Methodist Churches.) The motion was approved. Meanwhile all three of the local Ontario Churches, which included the two recently merged Presbyterian congregations, united into a single congregation. Due to the Ontario Methodist Episcopal Church having the largest membership at the time, the new church became known as the “Ontario Community Methodist Episcopal Church”, and its first assigned minister was Rev. George El Kent. Church membership of the newly merged churches was approximately 200 members.**

**As part of the merger, The Presbyterians gifted their white frame church building, which had been located on the east side of the Ontario Cemetery, to the newly merged church. This original frame building was pulled by horse teams to its new site on the west side of the cemetery. Several rooms were added to accommodate the larger congregation.**

**On July 17, 1917, the cornerstone of the newly merged church was laid, and the Ontario Community Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated and consecrated on December 23 of that same year. In 1918, a thirty stall, 3 sided horse shed was erected on the north side of the church in order to accommodate the large farming community. A church parsonage was built to the west side of the church during the pastorate of Rev. O.L. Williams. As the Ontario Community continued to grow, the**

**Springfield Township School was erected, directly west of the Ontario Community ME Church, in 1928**

**In 1947 renovations, to the tune of \$15,000, took place. Additions included a new Altar, Cross, Pulpit, Lectern, Organ, and Pastor's Study. (The organ was a gift from the entire Ontario Community as a memorial to soldiers killed in World War II.) The Dedication service was held April 20, 1947, under the leadership on Rev. McNary.**

**Ground was broken for the New Educational Wing in 1957, under the leadership of Rev. Paul Giffin, to the cost of \$62,000. The new addition included 7 classrooms and a Fellowship Hall (now known as the Friendship Room). The new Education wing was dedicated on April 27, 1958.**

**In 1967, the Ontario Community ME Church celebrated its Golden Anniversary with a roster of over 800 members.**

**The construction of our Church's New Sanctuary was begun by Zahn Construction in August of 1968, and dedicated on January 11, 1970. Seating capacity is 400 with the space built to encourage mobility and flexibility of furnishings, organ console, and seating. The exception to the flexibility plan was the large wooden cross, which is to remain a steady constant presence at the front of the church. Also in 1970, with continued growth in membership leading to the hiring an associate minister, a 2<sup>nd</sup> parsonage was built on Rock Road.**

**In 1973, as a result of the merging of the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church, The Ontario Community ME Church became the Ontario United Methodist Church, with a total membership of 914. In 1979, a 15 foot tall by 9 ½ feet wide stained glass window was purchased with memorial funds and installed at the front of the sanctuary.**

**Further additions to the church in 1989 included a great room which was made to seat 200, and named Giffin Hall, in honor of former pastor Paul C. Giffin. Also added in 1989 were the Centrum, 2 offices and a work area, as well as a kitchen, choir room and new restroom facilities. Extensive refurbishing and renovation of the education wing took place in 1999. In 2000 additional sanctuary renovations were made and included a sound system, new carpeting, a new altar, and new furniture. In 2002, a new entrance and hallway were completed which included the Prayer Room, Crib, and Toddler Nursery and Community Room/ Choir Room.**

**As we remember our faithful pioneer ancestors, and all our faithful families and members and stewards of our church over the years, we are excited to be planning OUMC's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. May we continue to recognize and rejoice in the blessings of ou Lord and God in the years to come!**

**By Kathy Strunk**

## Pastors of the

### Ontario Community ME Church, Ontario United Methodist Church

George E. Kent (1915 - 1919)

Paul Giffin (1953 – 1961)

Odysseus L. Williams (1919 - 1923)

Richard A. Yaussy (1961 – 1979)

Roy S. Smith (1923 – 1925)

Paul R. Crooks (1979 – 1981)

William B. Robinson (1925 – 1929)

Robert L. Smith (1981 – 1984)

William P. Brown (1929 – 1933)

Robert J. Hahn (1984 – 1990)

Chester R. Stockinger (1933 – 1936)

Richard J. Parks (1990 – 1995)

Roy A. Hall (1936 – 1939)

James F. Winkler (1995 – 2006)

Edgar H. Thompson (1939 – 1941)

Dave E. Case (2006 – 2010)

Clarence H. Bowers (1941 – 1945)

Sondra Snode (2010 – 2013)

Robert W. McNary (1945 – 1949)

Peggy L. Welch (2013 - )

Ray L. Krepps (1949 – 1953)