

### **EARLY OPPORTUNITY**

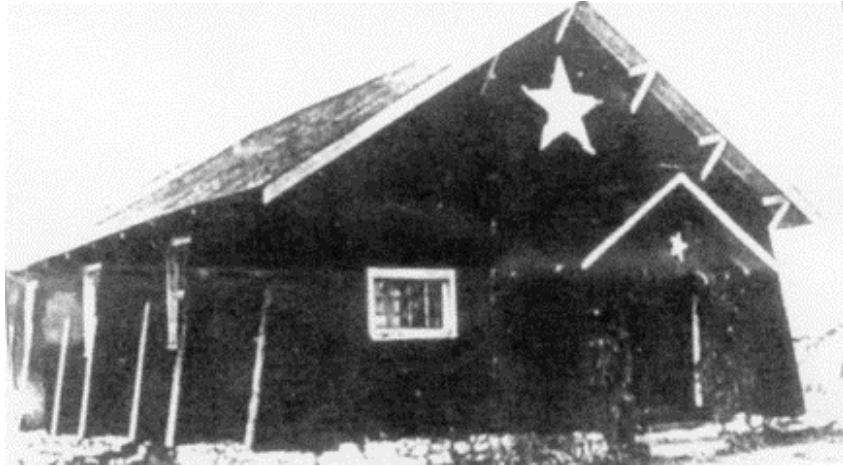
In the year 1906, Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States, Edward VII was King of England, and Washington had been a state for 17 years. The automobile had been invented, but was considered little more than a novelty item for the wealthy. Horse power meant real horses; the ones that pulled the farm equipment and provided transportation for the people of Spokane Valley between such places as Dishman, Greenacres, and Opportunity. In between these towns were miles of family farms and apple orchards.

According to Mrs. Erma Forkner, "In the early part of the century, the church, the school, and the family were almost synonymous with community." Churches were few and far between, and a traveling preacher of any denomination was welcomed by all believers. In 1906, an inter-denominational group in Opportunity met to hold Sunday School classes and worship together in private homes and even in the town hall. For a while they met in the home of the Box family, and finally, they began meeting in the grade school at the corner of The Appleway (now Sprague Avenue) and Bowdish.

By 1908, the Christian people of Opportunity had worked together to build the Baptist church on the corner of The Appleway and Union. The Baptists and Methodists shared the costs of heating and equipment, and the two congregations supplied the pastor on alternate Sundays.

"On Wednesday, April 15, 1908, (our 7<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary)," according to the diary of Mrs. J.J. Collins (Ethel), "our church was organized by Rev. Hawk, Superintendent. The first minister was Rev. Little, a young man, but he was here but a short time. They both came home with us and stayed all night. We lived in the Cobble Stone house on The Appleway."





Mrs. William Coddington remembers that four days later, April 19, was Easter, and District Superintendent U.F. Hawk and Rev. Little conducted service for the new congregation of the Opportunity Methodist Episcopal Church. At a Board meeting after the service, Rev. Little was appointed pastor. He was killed in an auto wreck soon after his appointment.

"Rev. Spalding was our second preacher," wrote Mrs. Collins. "He came Saturday, May 10, 1908, and stayed all night with us. As long as he was our preacher he came on Saturday and went calling, and made our house his home."

A note from an unidentified early church member said, "I'm not sure just when the Conference time was changed, but there for a while we had ministers coming and going so fast that we couldn't be bothered with the Conference anyway."

During the cold, rainy fall of 1911, with Rev. A.J. Baldwin as pastor, construction began on a new church building at the southwest corner of The Appleway and Bowdish. The members built their church in the dead of winter, and Mrs. Coddington said they had to scrape two or three feet of snow away before they could start to work. It was intended as a temporary meeting place. "There was no foundation, but it was enclosed to keep out the wind. It was on the back of the lot and faced the schoolhouse across Bowdish." Later on, a foundation was built, a partial basement dug, and a furnace installed. In 1922, the church was turned to face The Appleway, to allow for a parking lot in back.

Once the work was started, everyone went to work, including new pastor, Rev. M.R. Brown. With a borrowed sled and horses, members hauled lumber to the site, and brought bricks for the chimney all the way from Spokane. The day before the building was to be dedicated, and unknown donor telephoned from Spokane that she was sending, on the afternoon interurban railroad, "a yardage of carpet for the rostrum." This was retrieved, rushed to the church and tacked down before midnight. A few hours later, Opportunity Methodist Episcopal Church was officially dedicated to the glory and the work of God.

Later, when the church was weathered and in need of paint, a "painting bee" was held. After a potluck supper served by the Ladies Aid Society, the men mixed crankcase oil and a brown pigment together, and turned the church into what became known throughout the Valley as "the Little Brown Church," after a beloved hymn, "The Little Brown Church in the Vale." While the men painted, the women glued figured paper on the windows to reduce the sun's glare. The geometrical design looked much like stained glass as the sun shone through it. The Little Brown Church became the center of the social as well as the spiritual life of the community.

And the "temporary meeting place" served for many years. According to an earlier church history whose author is unknown, the church was very creative in its fund raising, and was the base of many activities. "Hundreds of dozens of doughnuts were made and sold. Mothers mixed and baked, and the children sugared them by vigorously shaking them in sacks containing powdered sugar." The young people then delivered the sacks to those who had ordered them.

"Many hundreds of gallons of ice cream provided hours of cranking as well as the fun of eating at our Ice Cream Socials. From many kitchens, food came to be spread on many tables, and this social time preceded many of the official meetings when our people tried to solve the church problems."

## THE CHURCH BEGINS AT DISHMAN



Soon after the Dishman School was built in the fall of 1910, a few families gathered there to worship and to organize a Sunday School, with Isaac Craven as the first Superintendent and Belle Forkner and Ella Niles as teachers. This was the start of the Methodist Church in Dishman.

By 1912, the country was changing again; Arizona and New Mexico became states, Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls were founded, and the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank. In the Spokane Valley, the two new Methodist Episcopal congregations at Dishman and Opportunity were made parts of a single Charge, being served by the same pastor, the Rev. M.R. Brown.

Almost immediately, Pastor Brown and the church Board members started planning to erect a church building right across the road, on the southeast corner of Valleyway and Hutchinson. In the winter of 1912-13, they dug the basement. A church near Washington and Boone had recently been razed, and much of the material to build the Dishman church was hauled from that demolished church. With teams and sleds, they brought what they needed to begin building. Later, the story was told that the Rev. Mr. Brown planned his new church based on the size and shape of the materials available, and the number of windows that were salvaged. The completed church was dedicated on a hot afternoon in August 1914, by District Superintendent B.E. Koontz.

This fine new church had a daylight basement which served as a multi-purpose area with windows on three sides. It had a large room for classes, dinners, and parties. The kitchen, too, was on the lower floor, complete with a wood and coal range which served to heat the room as well as to cook the meals.

Upstairs was the sanctuary and a classroom that could be opened into the sanctuary as needed. Each floor was heated by a long, wood-burning stove with a drum on top through which the smoke and heat circulated for greatest efficiency.

The Dishman church congregation was small, ranging at various times, from forty to sixty members. Sundays the members were involved in church activities all-day. They began with Sunday School at ten o'clock, followed by morning worship service. In the afternoon, Epworth League for high schoolers (the term teen-ager had not yet been coined) and young singles was followed by the evening worship service. And on Wednesday, everyone attended Prayer Meeting.

Years later, after mid-week prayer meeting was discontinued, Bea Ferleman's 9<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School class wanted to know why. Erma Hardin Forkner wrote to the class. Part of her response is quoted here:

*"When I was young we went to Sunday School, church, Epworth League and church again, and prayer meeting on Wednesday night. Each winter there were two or three weeks of revival meetings (evangelistic) Monday through Friday evenings besides. There were always individual prayers, testimonies and altar calls. One Sunday a young woman expressed what I had been feeling. She said she had never been 'converted.' She was born into a Christian family and had just 'grown in grace' and was still growing.*

*Apparently there were many like me. We began to feel that our prayers and testimonies were more like those of the Pharisees, expecting to be heard for our much speaking, rather than like the Publican who simply prayed, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Besides this, the emotional glow of the revival did not seem to last through a year of hard living. Gradually we began to heed Christ's directive to pray in our closets. We began to try to live our witnessing rather than to talk about it."*

According to notes by Mrs. Forkner, the first baptismal service of the Dishman church was held on the banks of the Spokane River, with the river serving as the baptistery for those who chose to be immersed. The first in line was Mr. L.R. Goodrich.

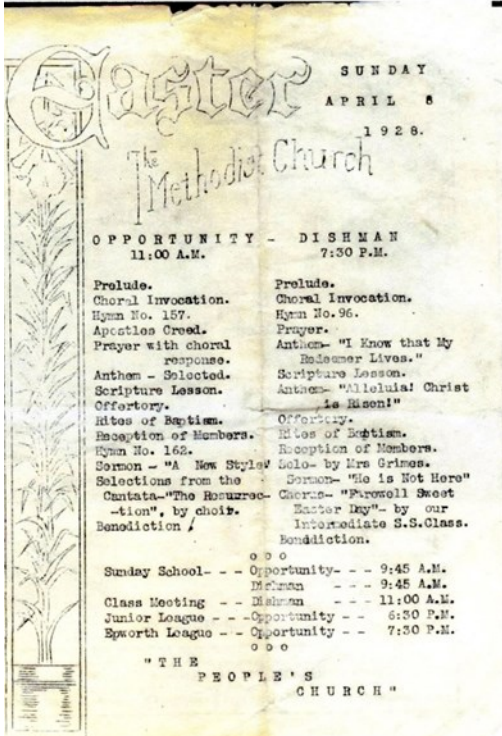
All who chose standard Methodist baptism ("sprinkling") received the sacrament in the worship center at the school house.

Sometimes change happens so gradually that it is hardly recognized. For example, when the church was established in 1910, people walked or came to church in horse-drawn carriages, but as time went by, more and more members began to drive to church in automobiles. By 1920, the person arriving by carriage was a rare sight.

More obvious changes came about because of World War I, when our young men went off to war. The “lowly country gink from ‘way out west where the hoptoads wink” that the country was singing about might well have been from Spokane Valley. The young men who left the farms and orchards to join the army saw a different way of life as they trained and served. Because of this, some changed their future plans from working the family farm, to moving to town and working in business or industry.

During the war, those “on the home front” did volunteer work such as knitting socks and sweaters, and rolling bandages for use by the young servicemen. Letters from home were considered a patriotic duty, and people wrote and prayed for “the boys” until the Armistice was declared, November 11, 1918.

The “Roaring Twenties” brought a challenge to what had always been accepted as morality, with the introduction of “flaming youth.” The young men home from the war were testing their new-found freedom, to the despair of their devout parents. Young women bobbed their hair, wore makeup, short skirts, and some of them even smoked and drank with the boys. The Methodist Church stood firm in its basic family values, holding fast to its faith.



Then came what has become known as the “Great Depression.” The descriptive word “great” was added later; while it was going on, most people just called it “the depression.” It was a period of hard times, and people of the Valley churches were family and support for each other. Each of these historic events left its mark on the life of the church, but the faith of the Spokane Valley Methodists, and their activities in the community provided a much needed center where families still played and prayed together.

One memorable annual event was the Dishman Ladies Aid Society’s bazaar and chicken dinner. Nearly everyone in Dishman came to chat with neighbors, to enjoy the meal, to buy Christmas gifts, and to support the workings of the church. The Ladies Aid was, simply stated, the support group of the church.

Some time in the mid-twenties, the two churches were considered to be separate charges for a while, with different pastors, Ladies Aid Societies, and youth groups. In the early thirties, they were brought together again, and at the Conference level, there was talk of merging the two congregations and having one single building. Within a few years, it became obvious that this was the only solution. Both churches had become inadequate for the ever-increasing congregations, but they were not big enough for two separate new churches. After numerous

congregational meeting, and with “pressure from the Conference,” the two church merged, and plans for a new building were begun. In 1939, Franklin Roosevelt was in the middle of his second term, “Gone with the Wind” was the book and movie everybody was talking about, and the clouds of war were hovering over Europe. That was the year the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church united to become one denomination – The Methodist Church.



## THE GROWTH OF GREENACRES

While Christian worship and study were going on in Opportunity and Dishman in 1907, 'way off in the apple orchard community of Greenacres, a group of Methodists met for the same purpose. Their first home was by Alma Thomsen to have first been a barn, but was later turned into a school house. By the time the new Methodist group met there, it was the home of Jessie Braucht.

One of the first things they did was to organize a Ladies Aid Society, followed soon by the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies. And one of the first things the Ladies Aid Society did was to pledge \$550 to help build a new church. Within a year "The Aid's" membership had doubled, and the women had fulfilled that pledge with funds earned by serving dinners, having ice cream socials, and presenting entertainments. The Ladies Aid Society's pledge represented just over one-fourth of the cost of the new building - \$2000.

J. Green Long donated lots for the building in 1907, and by 1908 the structure was built, through dedication and hard labor of all the members. Then tragedy struck. Before they every held a service in the new building, it burned to the ground. This would have discouraged a less hardy breed of folk than the Greenacres Methodists. They were stunned and saddened, of course, but they were determined to get right back to work and rebuild. Every one pitched in, and at last, just before Christmas on December 15, 1908, the newly rebuilt Greenacres Methodist Church was dedicated, with special thanks to the efforts of Rev. Henry Brown and Ladies Aid Society.

By 1920, World War I was over, and life began to return to normal. In Greenacres, the members of the Methodist church decided to build a parsonage on their property, and by 1922, the new building was in use. In 1926, a basement and another room were added to the church building.

In 1940, after the unification of several Methodist denominations, The Ladies Aid Society, Home Missions and Foreign Missions were brought together under one name, Women's Society of Christian Service which became known as W.S.C.S.

By the early 1950s, the Depression was a thing of the past, the war was over, and "togetherness" was the byword of the times. Young couples who had been separated by war now started their families, bought homes of their own, and/or attended college under the "GI Bill." Dwight Eisenhower was President of the United States. It was a time of relative calm in the country, and participation in church and all its activities was a way of life in the Spokane Valley.

After almost fifty years, the church needed a little sprucing up, and once again the whole congregation joined in. They remodeled the south entrance to the basement in 1954. As reported in "The History of the Greenacres Methodist Church and Women's Society of Christian Service," the church "has kept up with the growth of the Valley. It now has two women's groups, each one doing their best to help the Kingdom of God spread in the valley and all parts of the world."

One unusual quality about Greenacres Methodist men made them famous. Not only were they active in helping with construction and maintenance of the church, the parsonage, and the grounds, but they were great cooks! Each spring, Greenacres Methodist Men cooked and served "Ein Grossen Festessen," their annual German smorgasbord feast, one of the most eagerly anticipated events in Spokane Valley. The menu included such delights as *schnitz und kapfe*, *wienerschnitzel*, *kases*, *salat*, *ud kohl*, as well as dessert of *rharbarbe pastete* and *himbeere bavarian ruhn*. Among those involved in the dinner were Allen Sherrodd, Oscar Liere, Danny Ruddell, and Norris Carter.



In 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren, forming The United Methodist Church.

As population shifted, and farmlands gave way to commercial “progress,” the Greenacres United Methodist Church membership started to shrink, and at the Conference level, there was talk of consolidation with the Spokane Valley church.

A letter went out from Allen Sherrodd, Chairman of the Official Board, to all members of the congregation, presenting the issue that needed to be addressed before a decision could be made. What would the future of the church be? The Board believed that Greenacres would grow in the near future, and there would be a need for a Methodist Church in the east end of the Valley. They did not want to close their church, but the leadership and financial obligations remained the same, while the number of individuals to support them was ever-decreasing. Each member was asked to respond to a questionnaire and return it before the first of March, 1970.

Should they close the church and demolish it to avoid vandalism? If so, what should be done with all the memorials that had been given through the years?

Maybe there could be a cooperative relationship with the Spokane Valley church, whereby one pastor would be in charge of both congregations, but an assistant pastor might be appointed to lead the Greenacres congregation and live in their parsonage. The associate’s salary could be a divided responsibility between the two churches.

Sunday, March 1, the responses to the letter were reported, followed by a general discussion. The end result was that in June, 1970, District Superintendent Paul Beeman conducted a service of consolidation uniting Greenacres with the formerly merged congregations of Dishman and Opportunity, to be known as Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, with all activities taking place at the facility at Main Avenue and Raymond Road.

Part of their sanctuary became a part of the Memorial Chapel at the new location. Most notable of these gifts was the organ which was used in the chapel for many years.

It had been a very difficult decision, but once the two congregations were consolidated, the new members of Spokane Valley United Methodist Church became active, giving their energy, enthusiasm and Christian devotion to God’s work in their new church home.



## CHANGING AND GROWING

With volunteer labor, proceeds from chicken dinners and concerts as well as gifts from members and friends, the mortgage was paid off, and the document burned in a celebration service led by Rev. Mark Freeman. Later in 1946 the new building dedication service was led by Bishop Baxter.

Next project was to build a parsonage across Main Avenue from the church. At a cost of \$16,000, the building was completed in 1947, and Rev. Filbert and his family moved in just before Christmas.

More chicken dinners and concerts, plus the "Dollar a Month" club raised funds to buy a Hammond organ for the sanctuary.

By 1954, houses were replacing the open fields in the Valley, and families in the neighborhood meant children in Sunday School. The membership was growing rapidly, and it was obvious that more room was needed. With pledges of \$67,000 to the building fund, by 1956 a fine new education wing and a multi-purpose room which was also a gymnasium were built. The building was consecrated by Dr. Richard Decker in October.

According to a previous church history whose author is unknown, "For the next few years, we were involved in outreach programs. The Youth of the church sponsored a displaced young man from Holland, Evert Heineman-Renaud. The venture turned out right well. His first employment was with the Barclay & Brown Store in Spokane."

Through the Spokane Council of Churches, our Commission of Missions, with Mrs. E.H. Smith, chairman, arranged for a refugee family. Arrangements provided by MCOR (Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief) for the Gromow family to arrive in Spokane just before Thanksgiving, 1956; Mr. & Mrs. Kirel Gromow, Peter (10), Maria (8), Katerina (5), Tamara (2), and Elizabeth (9 months). "Mr. & Mrs. Smith bought a small house, and with the help of member families supplied the household needs for Gromow family. For several years our church continued to help provide for them."

Knox Abbott was the church's representative to the Spokane Valley Athletic League in 1950, and he continued to work with the League for many years. According to an article he wrote, the organization had a "two-fold benefit. It provided exercise and recreation for the young men and boys, and possibly kept them off the streets and out of trouble. Since church attendance was required for participation, this was a means of keeping them in Sunday School. This seems to be the age at which they drift away.

"The League grew from 6 teams to a high of 24 teams in 4 classifications with about 250 boys participating. Through the years this has been a good program for recruiting unchurched boys and holding our own boys. There are whole families in the church who first came because their boy played basketball.



Things never stayed the same for very long. In 1959, the total membership was 680, it was clear that the congregation was out-growing the sanctuary. Three options were presented: remodel the present facility; move to another site; build a new sanctuary.

After all the pros and cons were discussed at length, finances were arranged, and ground was broken November 20, 1960, and the cornerstone laid in February, 1961.

Funds for furnishing the new sanctuary were very scarce, but memorial gifts provided things like pews, organ, Bible holder and cross, kitchen equipment, hymnals, the lighted exterior cross, and library equipment.



## VALLEY METHODIST \$100,000 ADDITION

The two-floor church school unit shown here (center) joins older unit at right, and multi-purpose room (below) of the Valley Methodist church, Main and Raymond Street. The addition will accommodate 350 pupils.

The concrete-block multi-purpose unit as it appears from Sprague Avenue. The three units forming a "Z" shape, are a sign of expanding church building programs to serve the Valley. The church sponsors three basketball teams; Knox Abbott is sports supervisor.

The new senior high room shown here will seat 100-teenagers. Mrs. Don Sullivan, church secretary stands by the door which opens into kitchen. Room is just down the hall from the multi-purpose unit.

During the 1950s and '60s, whole families participated in church activities, and MYF was the place to be on Sunday evening. Most of one's friends were members of the same church, and youth groups were huge. Many people have worked with the young people in the past 100 years, but "The Bonnies" seem to evoke the strongest, fondest memories. For many years, Bonnie (Schultz) Randles and Bonny Moss were leaders, counselors and friends to the youth of the church.



At one time, under the direction of Shirley Richner, there were about 80 young people in choirs. The Youthsingers performed all over the northwest, and presented concerts at the home church that drew a full house every time. Some other involved in the music of the church at that time were Edgar Mason, Lois Iller, Jake Mauk, Kathy and Dave Murbach, and the singing Croskreys who even made a record of their own. Between 1961 and 1990, with Ron Shaffer acting as liaison between church and organ company, two organs were purchased for the sanctuary. The grand piano in the sanctuary was the gift of Larry and Yvonne Thompson, and for a while, Larry played it to accompany congregational singing during worship.

For about ten years, Carol Filippini was church organist, with several people substituting for Carol from time to time, among them Ruth Mogan, a Methodist Deaconess, and Lucille Hurlbut. Marcie Matthies served as Choir Director for several years, followed by David W. Johnson (not to be confused with Dr. David J. Johnson, pastor beginning in 1999). Dave Johnson's wife, Cindy, played the organ and sang in the choir as well. When Bob Roberts was pastor, his wife, Julie, first served as choir accompanist, later as choir director and organist for worship.

In the 1980s, hand bells became a part of the music program, with the purchase of three octave of bells. In the '90s, Janet Shaffer added a set of chimes in memory of her father. The Chimaleers, as they were first called, were led by Peggy Rudolph, then by David Johnson and Julie Roberts. 1999 introduced Jeff Batdorf as music director and Synnove Anderson organist.

Through the years, this has continued to be an "outreach church." Under the leadership of Dr. Bruce Parker in the mid-80s, realizing that there was no mainstream denomination in Otis Orchards at the far east end of the Valley, a group of Methodists began a Sunday worship ministry held at the Otis Orchards grade school. Mary Jo Engelke assisted Pastor Bruch in the leadership, and with the help of Bob and Ruth Murray, Dorothy Riegel, and a group of dedicated others, regular worship services were held in the gym. This mission continued until a new church of another denomination was built in Otis Orchards.

Under the leadership of Lowell Brocklehurst, George and Mazel Stites, and the Refugee Resettlement Task Force, the church sponsored Nikola Dimitrovski from Yugoslavia in July, 1984. A year later Michael Pilarski was welcomed from Poland. The following year it was two more from Poland Janusz Stempinska and his sister Elizabieta.

The next group of refugees was from VietNam, with Lowell Brocklehurst doing most of the interface. Beginning in 1989 and continuing for several years, the church helped to support Nguyen Luom and her children My Linh, and Sang V.; Lien Do and son Do Minh Nguyen, and Lam Xuan T. and Van T.

Other outreach projects through the years have included the annual Corn Dinner, Antiques in the Valley sale, Craft and Hobby Shows, the UMW's Holiday Bazaar, and other events attended by people from the greater Spokane area.

The Spokane Valley Methodist Church has been the meeting place for Cub and Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire, Bible Study Fellowship, AA and Alanon. With Pastor Bob Roberts, they were involved in Vision 2000, which began the process of ReVisioning, under the leadership of Kay Fischer. Through this process, at a congregational retreat at Mead UMC, began the first serious thinking about modernizing the sanctuary and reorganizing the structure of the church officers. Out of this retreat, our mission statement was drafted, and plans for future began to fall into place.



### **A NEW MILLENNIUM**

At the end of the Twentieth Century, everyone was wondering what great changes would occur when all the computers in the world had to move from 1999 to "Y2K," a term commonly used to mean the year 2000. By this time, computers controlled most of the world's communications, travel, finances, and almost every aspect of life. Just one little error someplace on earth could change the world forever. Some people prepared for the end of the world. Many turned to prayer, and as the new millennium arrived, they offered prayers of thanks that, indeed, God was in charge, and all was well.

Spokane Valley United Methodist Church had a new pastor, Dr. David J. Johnson; a new music director, Jeff Batdorf; and a new position for Madelyn Bafus, Coordinator of Christian Education. Kyra Straub was "Interim" Coordinator of Youth Ministries, a position which lasted several years, and Kay Fischer, as Lay Leader, became a volunteer member of the staff.

Physically, one of the first changes to the church in the year 2000 was the removal of the dark "wall" across the chancel area of the sanctuary, opening more space for a wider variety of worship formats.

The church's new mission statement was based on four basic themes: Worship, Invitation, Nurture and Service (WINS), and each program of the church was designed to fit into one of these areas. Greater emphasis was placed on evangelism, and Lee Johnson became the first Evangelism Point Person. The church's theme song, composed by Jeff Batdorf, became "Reach Out," encouraging everyone to "reach out with the good news of Jesus."

In worship, one of the first changes was the creation of a separate service for "seekers" and others who wanted a more contemporary style of worship. The first service remained traditional, with music from the hymnal, anthems by the choir, and communion served at the kneeling rail in the chancel.

At 11 a.m. the “celebration service” began, using drama and visual aids as well as more modern songs of worship led by the Praise Singers. Members were encouraged to invite neighbors, friends and family to this more relaxed service.

“Forty Days of Purpose” was a book widely used by the congregation as a Bible study designed for small groups. After the forty days, many of the groups that were formed specifically for the study remained together as support, discussion and prayer groups. More than one hundred members were involved in small group ministry in 2005.

The biggest change of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at SVUMC was the renovation of the Original building. Before the professional builders took charge, church volunteers stripped away most of the walls and doors, down to the framing. When the renovation was complete, the main access to the building had moved from a small door on Main Avenue, to a large, well-lighted entrance on the lower level facing Raymond Road. A series of stairs and ramps led to large glass doors, and inside was a new “welcome center” with an information desk, all the staff offices, as well as a renovated youth room, restrooms, and best of all, an elevator, make the second floor accessible to the physically handicapped.



Upstairs, the elevator opened onto a lobby with entrances to the remodeled Memorial Chapel, a classroom, a craft room, and a nursery. A door leading to the education wing revealed newly painted hallways and classrooms. Although the building looked brand new, many of the programs were as old as the original little brown church. As with every renovation, members also did much of the interior finishing.

Ladies Aid, now known as United Methodist Women, was a strong, active organization, supporting a variety of mission projects through their annual bazaar, serving at wedding receptions and special projects, as well as through donations.

The reading group, headed by Anna Jenkins, provided a diverse list of books for members to read and discuss throughout the

year. The monthly fellowship meetings and general meeting and luncheons provided spiritual support for the women of the church.

The United Methodist Men met monthly for breakfast and a program. Through the annual bazaar and auction, the men served the community sharpening knives and scissors, doing yard work and household chores. The “Thursday Group” met weekly, first at McDonald’s, and then moving on to the church to do whatever upkeep project needed their help.

Gil Fischer has coordinated the effort to serve free cookies and coffee at a freeway rest stop each summer for several years, with help from everyone from cookie-bakers to spend-the-nighters. Donation from grateful travelers were the source of one of the most consistently successful fund raisers for the specific projects or for the general budget.

Monthly noon meals called “55+” were begun under the leadership of Madelyn Bafus, providing a meal and a program of special interest to older adults. Several seminars designed for this age group were offered during the year, and a new column was added to monthly “Communicator” called “Who Is My Neighbor?” Transcribed interviews by Doris Swehla, with a different family or individual highlighted each issue, helped the people get to know each other better. Summer of 2005 was the time for an old fashioned hymn-sing, followed by a picnic on the lawn under the oak tree.

The programs for children and youth were flourishing. There were children’s programs at both services – Children and Worship during the traditional service, and Sunday Sonshine during the celebration service. Wednesday evenings during the school year meant Rainbow, where the children had dinner, played games, sang, and had Bible study time.

In addition to Sunday School classes and youth group meetings, the young people served at dinners, helped to setup for church functions, attended “Convo” in the spring and Camp Twinlow in the summer. In 2004 a group called Deeper was formed for those who wanted to find a deeper faith and relationship with God.

Music, as always, was a major part of the worship services with the Celebration Choir, the Praise Singers, the Hand Bell Choir, and later, the Teen Choir. When Jeff Batdorf left, Elizabeth Gale became Music Director, leading the choir and playing organ and piano at the first service. Mike Twitchell was Music Director for the Praise Singers and the second service.

Spokane Valley United Methodist Church has always been an outreach church. For years the Service and Mission Team served their famous tuna casserole at St. Anne's Church in the city on a regular basis. They also served a meal each month at Crosswalk, a place for "street kids" to find acceptance and help. Their free Sunday lunch at the Spokane Valley Church, welcomed the local community on the last Sunday of each month. They also took their turn feeding the homeless and spending the night with them at Interfaith Hospitality. In February, 2005, led by Glenda Lovchik, the team worked through World Relief to sponsor the Besseh/Sawyer family, refugees from Bassa, Liberia. After fifteen years in a refugee camp in Ghana, the family of nine came to Spokane and the Methodist Church. Meme and her daughters, Claudia, Farcia, Teta, Stephanie and Hadja, plus Teta's children, Tico, Queen and Lucky, found a home in Spokane Valley, attending school and working, and actively participation in the church.

Upward Basketball was one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of 2005, and plans are in the works to make this an ongoing program for grade school young people. SVUM partnered with Spokane Valley Church of the Nazarene in planning and hosting the event. Over a period of about two months, more than 700 children and their families and friends filled our gym, including many in our congregation who weren't otherwise involved in church activities. Nancy and Jerry Larson operated the very successful Upward Café, serving breakfast, lunch and snacks throughout each Saturday's games.

The most thrilling part of each hour was when someone from our congregation or from the Nazarene Church took three minutes to give a personal testimony as to how God has worked in their lives.

Spokane Valley United Methodist Church was founded on faith in the power of prayer. Each meeting held in or for the church begins or ends with prayer for each other, for our church and for the world. Whether at work or play, planning or study, members serve as God's hands and feet and voices, in the church and in the community.

