



75th

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Evangelical United Church of Christ
204 E. Lockwood Ave.
Webster Groves, MO 63119

1995

OUR HISTORY

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST is the name given to the denomination composed of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, which, in the spirit of promoting church unity, merged in June 1957. The Evangelical and Reformed Church traces its lineage to the reformers of Germany, France, and Switzerland, while the Congregational Church stems from the Protestant Reformation in England leading to the early settlement of this country. These varied influences provide a rich, continuing, ecumenical heritage for this denomination of which our congregation is a part.

The official name of our church has been changed twice. In 1920 we were THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF WEBSTER GROVES. Following the union of the Evangelical Synod of North America and the Reformed Church in the United States we were called THE EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH OF WEBSTER GROVES. With the forming of the United Church of Christ we became THE EVANGELICAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF WEBSTER GROVES.

Seventy-five years ago, after a survey of the Webster Groves community revealed the presence of many people of the Evangelical faith and unchurched families, steps were taken in the spring of 1920 by Reverend August C. Ernst, then Field Secretary of the Board of Religious Education, to organize an Evangelical church. The first meeting was held on March 7, 1920 at the Suburban School of Music (now the Theater Guild of Webster Groves), located near Summit Avenue along the trolley tracks that once ran through Webster Groves. The first service of worship was on April 23, 1920 at 10:30 A.M.

At a meeting held later at the High School a representative group of people thoroughly discussed the matter of organizing a congregation, and Reverend Ernst was authorized to list a bona fide membership, secure incorporation papers and

negotiate the purchase of our present site at Plant and Lockwood Avenues. In a few weeks nearly \$2,000 had been collected as down payment, and the property was bought for \$8,700. For an additional \$1,000, fifty feet were added on the south side.

Then began the remodeling of the large house that was on the property and putting the grounds in order. Nearly every member donated hours of work, with the three men of the Ruhe family and Reverend Ernst putting in the largest number of hours. Art windows were purchased, the basement enlarged, and light fixtures donated and put in place. Walks were rebuilt and new ones laid. The driveway was surfaced, many of the big trees were trimmed and new ones planted, and shrubbery and flowers were set out.

The eagerness on the part of the people to move to the new quarters and to proceed with God's work was so great that the dedication service was held on November 21, 1920 before the remodeling was completed. Even the floors were not fully laid. All felt fortunate and grateful for obtaining what was considered one of the most desirable spots in Webster Groves for a church building.

A Sunday School, Ladies' Aid Society, Young People's League and Brotherhood were formed, and at the first Annual Meeting in January, 1921 the constitution was submitted and the charter closed with 59 names affixed. Present living Charter members are Frieda Lauermann, Wilhelmine Miller, and Helen Moeller. By the following year an addition was found to be necessary. In 1924 the second floor, which had been the pastor's residence (except for Sunday babysitting) was vacated for Sunday School purposes.

The desire to minister to the needs of others while providing for ourselves has deep roots at Evangelical. For example, when the relocation of Eden Seminary became necessary in 1924-25, the congregation and its members contributed a total of nearly \$6,000 to the new Eden. After this campaign was completed, the congregation expected to proceed with building a new house of worship but instead voted to join in the campaign for the new Deaconess Hospital with a total subscription of nearly \$2,500.

After the departure of Reverend Ernst in November, 1926, Reverend H. P. Vieth, Secretary to the General Council of the Evangelical Synod, a resident of Webster Groves, became interim pastor, dividing his time between the two offices. Reverend Vieth was instrumental in paying off the remaining indebtedness, at the same time leading the people to consider the purchase of a parsonage. From October, 1927 until May 1, 1928 Reverend Titus Lehmann, Associate Editor of the Church School Literature, also a resident of Webster Groves, was the interim pastor.

On May 1, 1928, Reverend H. H. Lohans, who also filled the chair of Religious Education at Eden Theological Seminary, took up his duties. During the eight years of his pastorate the congregation developed with new vigor, and an adequate sanctuary became absolutely necessary. In 1929 the congregation took steps to raise a building fund. Before the campaign could get under way, however, the depression manifested itself in such proportions that the project was abandoned. The money which had been gathered had to be used to repair and remodel the old building and move it to a place on the lot where it could remain, even after a new church building had been erected. This turn of events was a distinct disappointment to the congregation, but the members refused to be discouraged and bravely set themselves to accumulating further funds toward the erection of the new church as soon as possible.

The Church Council accordingly again took up the building project and sought to determine how much money the members were ready to contribute. The result was so satisfactory that the officers were encouraged to propose an extensive and systematic campaign for raising an adequate building fund. The McGarrah Church Financial Campaign Bureau was engaged to conduct a building fund campaign lasting from April 12 to May 18, 1936, and this campaign resulted in securing a fund of \$20,000 in cash and pledges.

Following the precedent at Elmhurst, where ten percent of the cost of erecting the College church had been contributed by the College, the General Conference of 1929 had promised similar assistance to the Webster Groves church, and the General

Council of 1936 voted to give \$3,000 in three annual installments for this purpose. The congregation thereupon authorized the appointment of a building committee and the erection of a church building to cost no more than \$42,000. F. E. Rixman was employed as architect, and the construction contract was awarded to Arthur Hess.

After the departure of Reverend Lohans in May, 1936, Reverend J. J. Braun, Executive Secretary of the Board of Home Missions, was called as interim pastor. Under his efficient leadership the committed parish broke ground for its new church building on August 23. It was a hot, dry summer, and the ground had to be watered for about three hours to permit the ceremony to proceed smoothly. The cornerstone was laid on November 8, 1936.

In January, 1937 Reverend Thomas R. Marshall assumed his duties. Our Fireside Group was organized in the parlor of the parsonage—before the fireplace in the living room—soon afterwards.

On September 26, 1937 the congregation was privileged to dedicate the new house of worship "to the glory of God and to the service of man."

The building was constructed of rubble stone quarried at Lennon, Wisconsin, with cut stone trim and a slate roof. It was designed to seat 350 people comfortably. The total cost was \$48,800.

The general theme of the stained-glass windows and memorials is the individual and world need for redemption through Christ as the Redeemer. The completeness of Christ's salvation is shown in the east and west panels of the front windows, where eight of the "I am" sayings of Christ are presented. These are: "I am the light of the world," "I am the door," "I am the way and the truth and the life," "I am the good shepherd," "I am the bread of life," "I am the vine," "I am the resurrection and the life," and "I am the Alpha and the Omega." These windows symbolize our fundamental individual and social needs.

The east-side windows portray the Christian year by a picture of the nativity, the symbol of the resurrection, and of Pentecost, with additional symbols, while the west-side windows

show representations of the cross and crown, peace, and the cross over the world and the Church.

The rear windows contain the historical symbols for the four Evangelists, the open Bible, the Cross, and the four representative areas where Christians reveal the Gospel, namely: agriculture and industry, literature, sculpture, and painting. The rear windows had to be shortened when the new narthex addition was built.

The Ruhe Memorial window in the old narthex, picturing the Good Samaritan, was given by individuals in the community.

All windows were made in the studio of Emil Frei, Inc., of St. Louis.

Because the old Sunday School building was far from adequate for this active congregation, steps were taken for an educational building to better house our Church School and the activities of the various organizations.

A two-story plan was adopted. Following the razing of the old building, ground was broken on October 17, 1954, the corner-stone was laid on February 27, 1955, and the new building was formally dedicated on November 6, 1955.

The long-felt need for a pipe organ to replace the electric organ that had been moved from the old church was met, and the instrument was dedicated on May 8, 1960.

After a ministry of twenty-five years, Reverend Marshall retired in June 1962. He was succeeded by Reverend Otis E. Young, who began his duties in July of the same year. With a growing membership, additional parking space was found to be necessary, and the property to the south of the church property was purchased and the house on the lot torn down. In 1967 both the church and the educational building were fully air-conditioned, and an addition to the church, including a new narthex, office area, pastor's study, and library, was built. During the summer of 1967, while this renovation was underway, the congregation met in combined services with First Congregational Church. On February 18, 1968, an enthusiastic group of members and friends gathered for the dedication of the remodeled building.

In recent reflections, Otis Young spoke of his years at Evangelical as being some of the best of his career. During his ministry the church adopted not only a two-service schedule—a major step forward—but two church school sessions concurrent with the services. He spoke of the "research groups" that committed themselves to weekly meetings for a full year at a time and which included a retreat at the end of the year. He mentioned prayer and Bible study held in the homes of members of the congregation.

Recognizing and responding to the needs of early childhood education, our church and Eden Seminary in 1964 jointly established the Eden Laboratory Pre-School. The first director of the school was Joan Tschudy, followed by Emma Lou Bizer, Reverend Bernice Buehler, and Dorothy Dixon. The present director is Ann Schroer, who assumed the position in 1977. It is a privilege to be associated with such a fine school.

Following a ministry of over six years, Reverend Young was "lured away" (as he puts it) to become General Secretary of the Division of Church Extension. The pulpit was then filled with the arrival in August 1969 of Reverend Daniel V. Horn.

Dan Horn was with us from 1969 until 1973. During this time the EUCC Seniors group was started. Also a group called P.I.G.S. (People in God's Service) was formed. This was a group of young adults, single and married, who met for fellowship activities and worked on special tasks for E.U.C.C. and the wider church. The Rhythmic Choir (now called the Liturgical Dancers), organized during Reverend Young's ministry, really got off the ground during this period, and we began the joint Junior High Fellowship with First Congregational Church. The "Koinonia" meal and program that has become traditional for the Lenten season was introduced during Rev. Horn's tenure.

During this time, Reverend Thomas Marshall was named "Pastor Emeritus" and again became a member of the staff.

Dan Horn especially remembers the "Getting To Know You" sessions that were held in people's homes. The pastor and his wife attended these meetings. Pictures were taken and posted. The topic of discussion was "The Future Of Ministry At Evangelical."

Upon Reverend Horn's departure, Reverend O. Walter Wagner (fondly known as "Occie"—rhymes with "hockey") was our interim pastor from 1973-1974. In his book *The Making Of A Minister* (Exploration Press, 1993) Occie devotes several pages to his ministry here. He mentions the celebration for the custodian's twentieth year of service when Mr. Miles was escorted down the aisle and presented with a new broom, the handle of which was wrapped with \$20 bills. He talks about the rosebuds on the altar for the newborn and the beginning of our coffee hour in the Fireside Room. Here is a quote from his book: "I did the best preaching of my life at Evangelical because I did the hardest preparation and because I loved every minute of that ministry."

When Reverend Wagner finished his interim, Reverend Louis Lammert served us for a short time from June to September 1974.

Reverend Walter W. Grueninger ministered to the congregation from 1974 to 1980. Reverend Grueninger and Reverend Wagner and Reverend Horn before him helped perfect the committee and lay leadership system of this church. Several members have told us that Walt had a gift of convincing our lay people that they, too, could serve well in capacities they had never dreamed was possible. The importance of adult education also increased during his tenure.

Reverend Grueninger was an engineer before he was called to the ministry. He had served as an Associate Conference Minister in the Missouri Conference prior to his selection as our pastor, and he was a skilled counselor. He was instrumental in the adoption of the ROWEL outreach program. He was very active in the Missouri Conference and St. Louis Association activities.

Gail Grueninger, Walt's widow, spoke of their departure for the Caribbean. What was supposed to be a one-year stay turned into a 5 1/2-year event before Reverend Grueninger's return to the ministry in the U.S.A.

Upon Walt's departure, Reverend Mary Brueggemann and Reverend A. Hale Schroer ministered as a team to the congregation as interim pastors. During this time the church library was redecorated, and new shelving and other furniture were given as a memorial.

In 1981 Reverend Stephanie K. Weiner joined us as our seventh regular pastor. She was the first woman to serve as a senior pastor in the city of Webster Groves. During her ministry (1981-1990), the church purchased (in 1982) the Red Cross building next door. Following our acquisition of the building, located at 212 E. Lockwood, it was first used by the Webster Groves Day Care Center and is now occupied by the Parents As Teachers program of the Webster Groves School District. Acquiring this building not only provided us with outreach opportunities, but it preserved the upper parking lot that the church had been accustomed to using for a number of years. A van was obtained as a gift to the church during this period, and the church office was equipped with computers and a new phone system.

At the 1983 Annual Meeting, our Mission Investment Statement, indicating our commitment to increasing our support of institutions and agencies beyond the local church, was adopted.

Stephanie recalls the fine seminarians we had during her ministry and the many task forces that studied a great variety of topics. One of these task forces revived the two-service schedule, which was in use until very recently. She also spoke of the United Church Chair of Theology and History we helped to endow at Eden Seminary, the "Children In The Church" program that was jointly developed by our church, Eden Seminary, and Eden Lab School; also of the Ozone Rangers concerts at the ice cream socials (Remember when the neighbors called the police?), our affiliation with the Webster-Rock Hill Ministries, the picnics after the parades on the Fourth of July, and the choir exchanges that took place.

In 1990 Stephanie left us for Florida to become an Associate Conference Minister there. Our interim pastor was Reverend Ann Asper Wilson until Reverend Ted Mosebach arrived from Pennsylvania in 1991 to become our eighth regular pastor.

During Ted's ministry a considerable amount of renovation was done in the church, including a new doorway to the Fireside Room, carpeting in the narthex and Fireside Room, a

remodeled kitchen and ladies rest room on the second floor, new carpeting in the sanctuary, and window and floor work in Fellowship Hall.

Important programming that was introduced during this time includes the Two-By-Two Partners in Ministries, Confirmation Mentors, our work with Parents As Teachers in the 212 building, the rearticulation of our outreach commitment, the increased fellowship time and Christian Education time after worship, and the CROP Walk, an ecumenical, community-wide project personally directed by Reverend Mosebach.

Ted resigned to return to his native East Coast in March 1995. Reverend Hale Schroer is serving as supply pastor until an interim pastor is selected.

On this Diamond Anniversary occasion, we celebrate in grateful remembrance the vision, the loving service and the cheerful giving of all who have gone before us this day. We acknowledge with grateful appreciation the varied contributions of our youth groups; church school staff, including its superintendents and directors; office and custodial staff; the pastors who have ministered to us; the committees who serve so well; our volunteers; the Chancel Choir and its directors—paid and unpaid; and last but not least the devoted members of the Church Councils past and present.

Who shall ever be able to record all the significant reminiscences of a grateful people who, through the years met, labored, and worshipped here?

Your Committee has planned various events for this anniversary occasion. While there will be pictures displayed of former days, let each in conversation contribute to one another the joy of our celebration. With one accord we lift our voices to God in hearty thanksgiving and give ourselves anew to the ever-continuing purposes of Christ and Christ's Kingdom in this time of new horizons that confront the Church of Jesus Christ. Recalling the things that have gone before, we press forward toward the goal to the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.

*Lead on, O King Eternal,
We follow, not with fears;
For gladness breaks like morning
Where'er Thy face appears;
Thy cross is lifted o'er us;
We follow in its light;
The crown awaits the conquest;
Lead on, O God of might.*

This history includes material written for the 50th anniversary of Evangelical, much of it compiled by the late Frieda Wolf. It was updated by Wayne Martin.

Our thanks go to Gail Grueninger, Dan Horn, Ted Mosebach, Stephanie Weiner, and Otis Young for sharing their memories of Evangelical with us. We also thank all the members and friends of the church who provided information and assistance to us.

This 75th anniversary booklet is affectionately dedicated to the memory of Miss Frieda Wolf, who served Evangelical as teacher, office volunteer, and church historian for nearly 70 years.

**75TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE: ED BISCHOFF,
KATHLYN FARES, SHARON HARKINS, DON KLEIN, ELLA MARSHALL,
WARREN MEHL (CHAIR), CLAIRE VIETH, GENE WEHRLI, LOLLY WEHRLI**

OPENING SERVICE
OF THE
New Evangelical Church
WEBSTER GROVES,
MISSOURI

W E L C O M E

SUNDAY, MAY 2nd, 1920

2:30 P. M.

IN THE HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
ON SELMA AVENUE
BETWEEN LOCKWOOD AND BIG BEND

