

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

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## We Celebrate the Past

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A History of the Highland  
United Methodist Church,  
Fort Thomas, Kentucky

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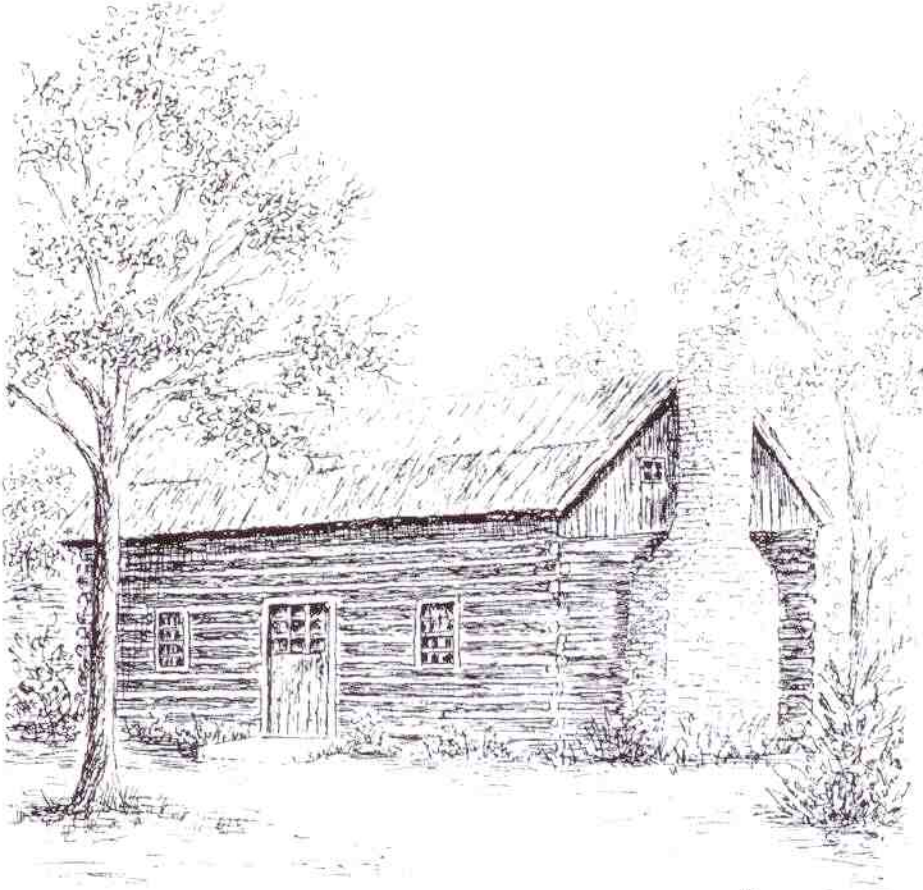
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## We Celebrate the Past

Highland United Methodist Church as it is known today, had its origin in a beautiful colonial home at what is now 1810 North Fort Thomas Avenue. The home was built in 1830 by William Richard Taylor Taliaferro who had been brought to this area by his mother after her husband had died in Virginia. Mr. and Mrs. Taliaferro, who were devoutly religious, opened their home each Sunday for services. After several months a congregation was formed and from this beginning, came the present Highland United Methodist Church. There have always been members of the Taliaferro family belonging to Highland Church from its beginning until the present time.



**Mt. Pleasant Church & School**  
Circa 1840

Soon the membership had grown so much that the members decided to build a church. This was a one-room log structure erected by Mr. Taliaferro himself, probably with slave helpers, on the edge of his property at the intersection of what is now North Fort Thomas Avenue and Holly Lane. It was in this log house that the Methodists worshiped for the next twenty years. On weekdays it was a school.

During this period Baptists shared the use of the log church and a competition for attendance developed. The Baptists sat on one side, Methodists on the other. It was agreed that the group who finally outnumbered the other would remain in Fort Thomas, and the other group would start a church in Dayton. Because a Mr. Gaddis, a Baptist, switched his loyalty to the Methodist side, the Baptists then built in Dayton and the Methodists remained in Fort Thomas.

The log church was later moved across the road and portions of it became the inner structure of the Stevins home at 1418 North Fort Thomas Avenue.

The population of The Highlands was growing rapidly and the church grew as well. To provide adequate facilities for the worshipers, in 1851 a new and larger frame church was built on the east side of Mt. Pleasant Avenue near what is now Southgate Avenue. Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church, as it was known at that time, served the congregation until 1900. For many years it was the only church in Fort Thomas. This structure is now part of a multiple family home at 1314 North Fort Thomas Avenue.

In 1900, eighty years ago, the present beautiful stone sanctuary was erected at North Fort Thomas Avenue and what is now the Avenue of Champions. Dr. J. L. Clark was pastor at this time. With its beautiful stained glass windows it is a quiet, dignified place of worship, beloved by all members of the congregation.

On May 5, 1980, the church was designated a Kentucky Landmark by the Kentucky Heritage Commission.

### **EDUCATIONAL BUILDING ADDED**

By 1923 the church school had outgrown the quarters in the sanctuary and it was necessary to erect the present educational building to provide classrooms for all departments of the school. Rev. J. P. Strother was pastor at this time. Rev. Strother was the only minister to serve the church at two different times, 1902 to 1906 and 1921 to 1925.

Although it is thought that the congregation was first organized in 1830—the record is not clear—the Centennial was celebrated in September 1931, during the pastorate of Dr. Will B. Campbell. Highlight of that celebration was a beautiful pageant written by Miss Caroline Kellogg and Mrs. Will Campbell called "The Passing of the Years." It recounted the growth and progress of the church during its first century. The last celebration was held in 1950, commemorating 120 years of Highland History.



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## ADULT CLASSES BEGIN

Previous to 1912, a group of men and women met together each Sunday morning in the church for Bible study. On May 18 of that year when the pastor, Rev. W. C. Savage, made an appeal from the pulpit for a teacher for the women, Mrs. C. M. Sinclair volunteered. Under her leadership the class grew to such proportions that it was difficult to find a room in which to meet. They moved from place to place until they finally occupied their present room in February, 1925. Though small in numbers, this class is still active today.

After the women of the church had organized their own Bible Class in 1912, the men took similar action in 1915. Shortly after Rev. J. M. Fuqua came to Fort Thomas, The Men's Bible Class was organized with Sidney Wright as its first president. Their first teacher was Frank Cosgrove, who was then superintendent of the Fort Thomas Schools. This class was active for many years, but finally disbanded in 1974.

Other classes meeting present needs have sprung up and are growing. There is more on this in the Christian Education Section.

An outstanding Sunday School class still thriving for young adults is the Wesley Fellowship Class which was organized in 1935 under the pastorate of Rev. Roy Kleiser. The class in 1950 had a membership of fifty-eight.

## WOMEN'S WORK BEGINNINGS

The Woman's Society of Christian Service, now known as the United Methodist Women was organized in 1940 with 140 charter members. The first president was Mrs. C. M. Sinclair. Miss Jessie Schriver, a faithful member of long standing with a deep interest in mission schools and orphans homes had made a great contribution to the women's work of Highland Church. She gave at different times a total of \$5,500 toward a home being built in Seward, Alaska for native orphan children. Given the privilege of naming the home, she named it "Jessie Lee," the name of a young niece in Fort Thomas. Prior to 1940 the women were organized into a Missionary Society which promoted the work of the church in home and foreign fields. There was also a Church Club, made up of twelve circles, each with its own chairman. These circles took care of the local work. Mrs. George Brayton was general chairman of this club. Much of the success of the United Methodist women can be attributed to the inspiration and influence of the excellent leadership of the early days. More on current women's activity in a later section.

## MISSIONS - ALWAYS A SPECIAL INTEREST

The strength and vitality of a congregation is sometimes measured in terms of its mission outreach.

Highland Church has maintained a unique approach to missions. Since Dr. Joel B. Ross, who had served as Sunday School superintendent, went as a medical missionary to Korea in 1900 and helped establish the Wonsan Christian Hospital, we have had our own "Missionary Special." It was called at first "The Korean Special," and for many years the church contributed several thousand dollars annually.

Dr. Ross married in Korea and worked there for 29 years. He died in 1930.

After Korea fell to the Japanese, mission special money was divided among varying numbers of countries. Annual gifts to the "Special" have varied from two thousand to five thousand dollars, this money being over and above the ordinary missionary askings from the Conference. Altogether scores of countries have been touched by the "Special." Distributions are decided annually by the Missions Work Area.

Although this year's contributions totaled only about twenty-five hundred dollars, the Work Area on Missions distributed it five ways—to United Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief; Ludhiana Christian College, India; Red Bird Settlement, Kentucky; Methodist Mountain Mission; and "Volunteers in Mission."

The Volunteers in Mission were three men from Highland Church who joined forces with others in laying the groundwork for a new Methodist Church in Guadeloupe, Mexico, in October, 1979. They were Dick Thompson, Jim Engle and Mark Ross.

Interest from the Lepper Memorial Fund has been added to the Mission Special occasionally.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Gilchrist are chairpersons of Mission Work Area in 1980. The Gilchrists and Rev. and Mrs. Ross plan to be volunteers in January 1981.

## CHURCH LIBRARY STARTED

During the pastorate of Rev. Charles Grant, in 1945, the church established a library. This library provides Christian literature for both adults and children with a limited amount of fiction, with 2,500 books available. There have been a number of librarians during the past thirty-five years, but Miss Dorothy Phillips managed it from its beginning until the present time. Others who have served throughout the years are: Mrs. Palmer Talbutt, Mrs. Ralph Gillham, Mrs. Norman Button, Mrs. Carol Reynolds, Mrs. Arnold Johnson and currently Mrs. Don Day. When Mrs. Don Day was asked what Dorothy's title is now, she replied, "Dorothy should be called the Chief Librarian because she has displayed such a long-term, special interest in our books and those who read them."



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## THE CHURCH SERVES THE COMMUNITY

Through the years, Highland Church has served the community in many ways:

...From 1900 to 1915, all Highland High School baccalaureate services and graduation exercises were held in the sanctuary. Edwin Seiter, a fifty-year member of the church, was in the last class to graduate in the church.

...The Fort Thomas Woman's Club was formed at Highland Church in 1915 and held its meetings here until 1941.

...Since the '20s the Methodist Church has sponsored Boy Scout and Cub Scout Troops. Menefee Jewett was the first Scout Master of Troop #1, chartered in 1934. Presently we also have Explorer Post 77.

...During World War II the American Red Cross opened a surgical dressing unit at Highland Church in 1942. Many women of the community worked with materials received here, making dressings and bandages which were packed at the church and shipped to all parts of the world. This service was terminated at the end of the war in 1945.

...The church provided emergency classroom accommodations for seventh and eighth grades during the reconstruction of Highlands High School following a devastating fire in 1962.

...From 1967 to 1972 the church gave facilities for volunteers who conducted a program for mentally retarded children. Leader of the class was Mrs. Sue Reder, whose idea was to train the children for John Bauer's class at Woodfill School. Among persons who gave significant help to Mrs. Reder were Dr. Ralph Wesley, David Hartleb, Virginia Winslow, Marian Harper and Linda Dobson. The Northern Kentucky Association for Retarded Children took over the work in 1972.

...The church has given support for many years to Camp Sunshine, a camp for disadvantaged children, to Holly Hill Children's Home, and to the Weekday Religious Education Classes in the public school system.

...On three occasions the church has helped to resettle refugee families: In 1956 the Drago Mitrovitch family arrived from Yugoslavia, and they are now settled in Cleveland. In 1975 the Mook Choi family fled Saigon and, sponsored by Highland Church, were soon settled and on their own in Fort Thomas. In January, 1980, the Llanes family, political refugees from Cuba, arrived under our sponsorship and are adjusting to American life here.

Highland Church grew from that handful of faithful members in 1830, meeting in a home, to our present membership of 735. As we move along in 1980 the trend is upwards and we are optimistic about increasing membership while reaching out to others to tell them of God's Love.

Although the physical church has changed greatly during one hundred and fifty years, the spirit that brought it into being is little

changed, and the heritage given us by all those who have gone before is ours to cherish, nurture and pass on.

—Compiled by Mrs. Ralph Gillham

#### **SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK.....1880 to the present\***

T. N. Ralston.....	1880	C. A. Tague.....	1909
Orsan Long.....	1881	J. R. Savage.....	1911
J. E. Wright.....	1882	J. M. Fuqua.....	1914
B. F. Bristow.....	1883	J. P. Strother.....	1921
H. G. Henderson.....	1884	W. V. Cropper.....	1925
H. B. Cockrill.....	1885	Will B. Campbell.....	1928
H. C. Morrison.....	1886	Roy H. Kleiser.....	1934
W. E. Arnold.....	1887	W. P. Fryman.....	1939
D. E. Bedinger.....	1890	Charles W. Grant.....	1944
W. A. Cooper.....	1894	C. E. Vogel.....	1946
J. W. Crates.....	1896	H. W. Whitaker.....	1949
J. L. Clark.....	1898	Earl M. Fossett.....	1955
B. E. Lancaster.....	1901	W. A. E. Johnson.....	1961
J. P. Strother.....	1902	Ralph Wesley.....	1963
B. C. Horton.....	1906	Robert Wallace.....	1972
		David Ross.....	1978

\*Records before 1880 were not complete.

As you read these latter names you may be thinking "He married us" or "That one baptized our children" or "He received me into the church"...etc.

#### **Did you know that???**

.....Our church was a "Methodist Episcopal Church South" until 1939 when the Northern and Southern branches merged.

.....It was a "Methodist Episcopal Church" until 1968 when another merger took place with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, making us The United Methodist Church.

.....Three out of the six mayors of Fort Thomas have been members of Highland Church?—Dr. L. L. Ross, Frank B. Stegeman, and W. Bruce Ross.

.....The city-engineer-coordinator has always been a Methodist—"Charlie" Kuhn from 1930 (assistant '25) and David Noran from 1966.

.....Several school superintendents and many school board members also have been Methodists—Superintendents D. W. Bridges and Fred Williams among them.

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**Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church**  
Circa 1850 - 1900



1961 August



**Paul A. Duffey**  
Bishop



**Eugene Barbour**  
District Superintendent

Assisting ministers: Rev. David Ross, Rev. Eugene Barbour, District Superintendent, Dr. W. A. E. Johnson, Rev. Bill Parker

Love Feast - Mrs. Steven Langheim, assisting

2:00 p.m. Dedication of Parsonage by Bishop Paul A. Duffey

2-4:00 p.m. Parsonage Open House



**Taliaferro Home**  
First Church - 1830