

As we learned at the Anniversary Celebration, our church desperately needed more space, and the Building Fund now had a balance of \$189,000. Frank Jones was appointed to secure the services of an architect to draw plans for a new fellowship hall.

In 1996, the Shepherd Program was started in our church, with Marci Propes as chairman.

By January 1997, the Building Fund had grown to \$200,000. Gary Wilson said we were near our goal of 50% of the funds needed, we should hire an architect for a new fellowship hall, kitchen and for the present just a hull for future Sunday School rooms.

An extra phone line for the computer was installed in the parsonage. Dr. Thomas said he will set up a Web page. A Lanier Copier was purchased for the church office.

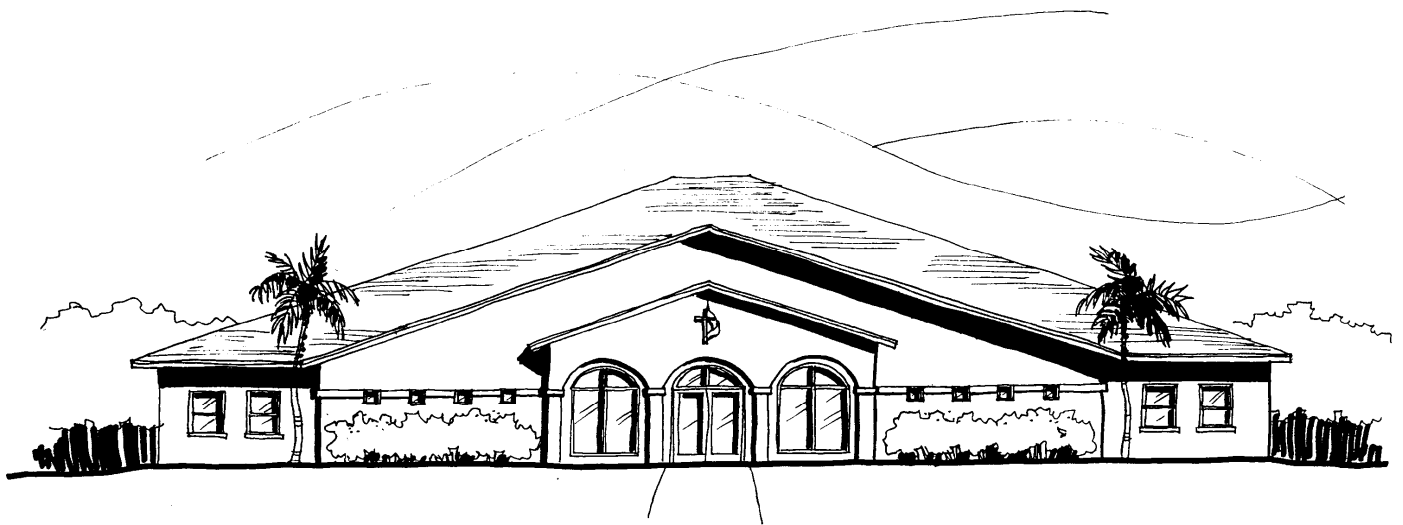
In August 1997 the Red Cross was given the use of a Sunday School room in the office building for \$5.00 per day, as a mission outreach.

In September, Michelle Brewington resigned as Youth Director, and Catherine Weiss was hired for that position.

To help raise funds for the building fund, Wednesday night dinners were started with Michelle Brewington in charge.

October 1997, pew attendance books were purchased.

The interest in a new fellowship hall continued. Frank Jones said we should proceed with the creation of plans and take bids for Phase One. District Superintendent Larry Cook came for a Church Charge Conference, where Phase One was approved (Votes 29 YES and 16 NO) and he said we could go ahead with our plans. Cost will be approximately \$600,000.00.



June 1998 – Rev. David Paul arrived and our church attendance grew until we soon started a second worship service each Sunday. We did not have rooms for all of the Sunday School classes, and we really needed a new building.

In February 1999, Gary Wilson reported that two weeks before he was “ready to forget the whole thing. NOW it is very exciting!” People had shown more interest in the past few weeks than they had in eight years. District Superintendent Larry Cook came for a Called Church Conference to approve moving ahead in our building plans.

In February 1999, new bi-fold doors were installed in the sanctuary and fellowship hall. We were short \$300 for this project, and the Boy Scouts presented the church a check for \$300 in appreciation for all the church has done for the Boy Scouts.



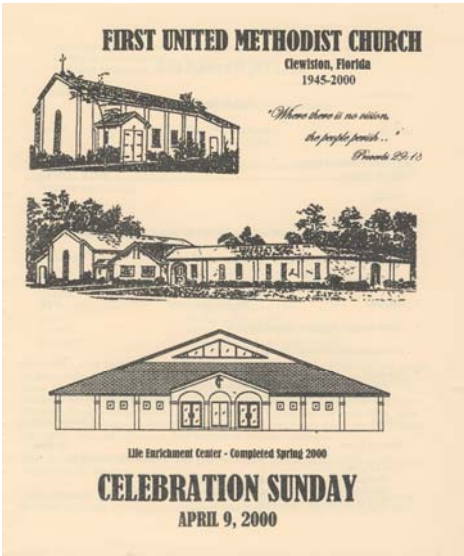
On June 9, 1999 there was a Church Conference and it was approved that we proceed with the building of the new fellowship hall.

July 9, we had acquired the Postell property and this would even off the corner of our property. Trees were cut down so cement could be laid for parking spaces. Contract with contractor, Gary Wilkes, Inc, was signed on July 15, 1999.

Ground-breaking was held after worship service, and work began on the new building. Gary Wilson was appointed chair of the Building Committee which consisted of 12 members.



In 2000 the Life Enrichment Center building was completed, and a special Celebration Sunday was a very special time in the life of our church.



April 2000 – purchased new 15-passenger van.

November 2000, the church received a gift of some property at Montura. When this gift was approved, the property was sold and money placed in the building fund.

2001 There was a leak in the water heater, causing damages in excess of \$10,000.00. There was a \$750.00 deductible in the insurance policy.

September 2001, permission was given for a sign to be installed in memory of Walter Wyse in the LEC parking lot to identify this property as the First United Methodist Church.

The renters had moved from our Rental property #2, and so many repairs were needed that it was decided to demolish the building.



Rev. Paul reported to the church that there had been little interest in the Clewiston Ministerial Association, and it would be shut down.



Upon the death of Katie Vancil on May 31, 2002, her home became the property of First United Methodist Church, and it was sold to raise money for the church. Katie was loved by everyone, and she will always be remembered for her use of scrap materials to make hundreds of lap robes for people who were sick or in nursing homes, as well as for her love of children. She was also very interested in missions. For years she made jelly and sold it for missions. After a mission trip to Costa Rica, she saw the need for ministers to have transportation, for they had to walk everywhere. There were no roads to travel from village to village, so she purchased five bicycles and donated them to ministers in Costa Rica.

In June 2002, Pastor John Hicks was appointed to shepherd our church. He brought with him his wife, Kathy, and hit the ground running. God opened the door for Pastor John to bring our community in Clewiston together for a September 11th program on the first anniversary of the Twin Towers disaster. It was an inspiring evening we will never forget. Musicians from all churches performed, and the music was beautiful!

The church office was renovated and we caught the vision to restore our church Sanctuary by Christmas. Our whole church came together, young and old, to help make this happen. From a Fall Bazaar to help raise money to removing pews and carpet ourselves, everyone pitched in. We were out of the Sanctuary for only two Sundays while the Sanctuary was



being painted and re-carpeted. We worshipped in the LEC, and were back in our newly restored Sanctuary in December.

