

## *Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Future*

### **Brief History of the Needlepoint Altar Cushions in the Sanctuary**

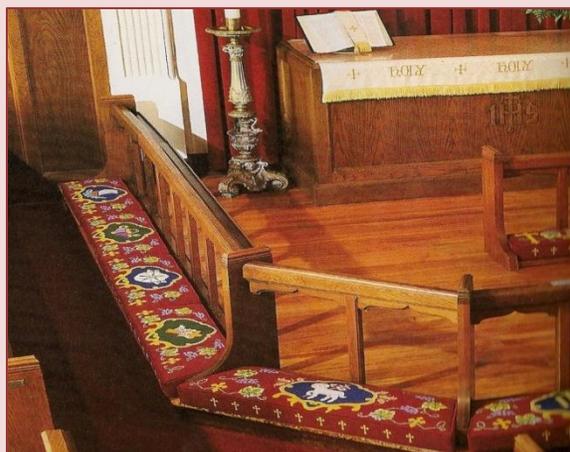
Prepared by Dr. Kevin Cason, FUMC Tullahoma Church Historian

On Communion Sundays at First United Methodist Church of Tullahoma, members of the congregation have the opportunity to kneel at the altar rails and partake in Holy Communion. As they take communion, the people place their knees on some very distinctive needlepoint cushions.

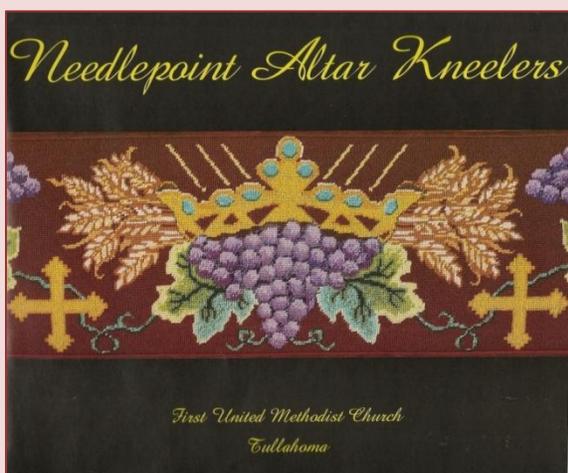
Although the needlepoint cushions seem common in today's worship services, they were not always there. It was not until 1996 that the needlepoint cushions were introduced to the sanctuary.

The needlepoint project began two years before in 1994 when Pat Thomas, who was Chairperson of the Worship Committee, asked Dot Porter to chair a needlepoint committee. Along with Dot's co-chair Ruby Murphy, the committee began to do research for the designs and colors to be used for the cushions.

To help with their research, the committee visited many churches in Tennessee and located books on ecclesiastical needlepoint and Christian symbols. They were also inspired by the interior of the sanctuary and the stained glass windows at FUMC Tullahoma.



*A View of some of the Altar Cushions at FUMC Tullahoma*



*View of the book that was created in 1996 to explain the symbols of the needlepoint altar kneelers.*

After the research was completed, the committee gathered volunteers from the church to be stitchers. The stitchers were Anne Miller, Nancy Wagner, Charlotte Bethmann, Betty Collier, Emma Lee Cowan, Kay Crosswy, Mary D. Henry, Amanda Kaupp, Jean Kelly, Lou Ann Mitchell, Sarah Osborne, Dot Porter, Jean Sanders, Emily Thoma, Roberta Vaughn, and Beth Welsh.

On May 19, 1996, the needlepoint cushions were dedicated at the worship services. In addition to creating the needlepoint cushions, a book was prepared that offered explanations of the different Christian symbols used for the needlepoint cushions.