

**HISTORY OF BRADEN**  
**FIRST 25 YEARS**  
**1908 – 1933**



Braden United Methodist Church owes its origin to a small group of dedicated Christians who became the nucleus to organize a Methodist Church in Toledo, Ohio sometime during the year 1908. They dedicated it to the Lord and named it the Canton Street Mission and became a part of the Methodist Church system. Prior to 1908 this dedicated group was meeting from home to home as a prayer band. Records show that some of those dedicated persons were Mr. & Mrs. Louis Allen, Beverly Harris, Bettie Williams, Charles Thomas, Anna Bland, Mary High,

George Weatherly, Lela Harris and Mayme Smith.

As a part of the Methodist Church, in 1908 the Lexington Conference sent Rev. George Chinn of Columbus Ohio to Toledo to pastor the Canton Street Mission.

In 1918, Rev. Charles J. Johnson was sent to pastor the Mission while Dr. D. Skelton was serving as District Superintendent. Naturally, during the first few years this young church was plagued by what seemed like insurmountable hardships and financial burdens. But as the black population grew so did the Mission. Everyone felt that the Mission could better serve the black community, if they relocated. After much prayer and at the urgings of the Holy Spirit, in 1920 the congregation purchased the northeast corner of City Park at Belmont Avenues. There were two buildings on this property at that time, therefore one was used as a place of worship until a church building could be built and the other was used as a parsonage. Pastor Johnson and a few loyal members with the help of friends began making plans to erect a church building. A donation was given by the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church to help defray the cost. In May 1924, the dedicated little flock, still with the Rev. Charles J. Johnson as Pastor, moved into a newly built, one room church structure. At the dedication service by Bishop Matthew W. Clair, Sr., the church was named "Braden" in honor of Dr. John Braden, President of Walden University of the Methodist Church at Nashville, Tennessee.

Reverend Johnson continued to serve faithfully until 1927 when Rev. J. M. Hayden was appointed and served during the lean years of the depression, followed by Rev. B. H. Williams who served until 1931 when Rev. J. C. Hayes was appointed to serve. Each Pastor brought new dynamics and growth to the congregation.

**HISTORY OF BRADEN**  
**SECOND 25 YEARS**  
**1933-1958**



In 1933 Rev. J. W. Chinn was appointed to Braden Church bringing with him a new kind of dignity and punctiliousness. 1935 brought to Braden the quiet leadership of Rev. Clarence T. R. Nelson for three years. Pastor Nelson had the distinct honor of helping to organize the Brotherhood of Methodist Men in the City. Pastor Nelson holds the distinction of being the only pastor, to have served Braden, and went on to be appointed as District Superintendent in the Methodist Church system.

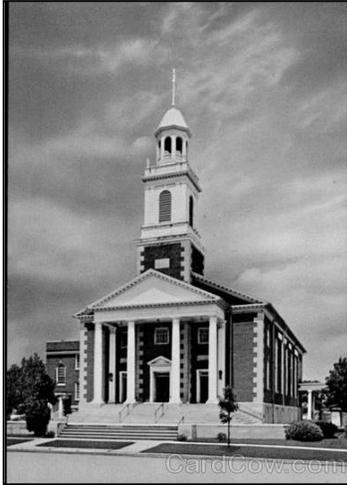
The evangelic style and character of Rev. Charles H. Wilkins in 1938 brought to Braden new and different challenges that guided the church forward to new heights. Then Rev. J. C. Hayes was reappointed for a second time and remained for a year. History has it that he was the only Pastor to have served Braden two separate times.

In 1940, the Rev. G. G. Morgan followed the second term of Rev. Hayes and brought with him a great wealth of knowledge about the workings of missions in the Methodist Church. Following Rev. Morgan in 1942 was the memorable Rev. John H. Simpson who served ten years growing Braden to a church that was involved in many aspects of missions. Having served ten years, Rev. Simpson set the stage for other long-term pastorates at Braden.

In 1952 the resourceful and wisdom-filled Rev. George W. Sherard was appointed Pastor. During his tenure, the church began raising funds to secure a new church home. It was during his administration that the beautiful church building, (Washington Congregational Church) on the northwest corner of West Woodruff and Lawrence Avenues was listed for sale at \$100,000.00. With much prayer, dedication and with their faith in the Lord Jesus, the small congregation of Braden Methodist Church prayerfully paid an initial \$25,000.00 down and continued to work to build up their funds in order to be ready when it was time to move into that grandiose worship facility. It was something that they could have only dreamed and prayed for and the Lord provided because of their faith and dedication.

When Rev. I. R. Sumner was appointed in 1955, he continued the dream and on Sunday, October 14, 1956, the small but faithful congregation of Braden moved into their new and present facility. Rev. Sumner remained at Braden until 1959.

**HISTORY OF BRADEN**  
**THIRD 25 YEARS**  
**1959-1983**



The 1958 appointment by the Conference brought to Braden Methodist Church, a persuasive dreamer, the Rev. Merrill E. Nelson. During his tenure the continuation of many great accomplishments happened. Braden was able to pay off the new church mortgage in full on March 28, 1965. The burning of the mortgage worship service was a celebration of the faith, dedication and commitment by those worshippers.

In the spring of 1966, Bishop Gerald Ensley of the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Churches appointed Rev. Albert L. Reed to Braden United Methodist Church. Rev. Reed a young, energetic pastor, full of new ideas and concepts brought Braden's congregation to numbers never known in the history of the church. Under his leadership, changes were made to the facility, new organizations were created and the men's ministry flourished. One of the ministry teams that were organized was the Pastoral Care Committee; a ministry team dedicated to assisting the Pastor and his family in any way possible. This ministry team prayed daily for the Pastor, his family and the well being of the "Church". Rev. Reed was a force to be reckoned with in the community and at the annual conferences convened at Lakeside, Ohio in June of each year. Rev. Reed served Braden faithfully for 20 years; the longest tenure of any pastor in the history of Braden.

Under his leadership Braden met and overcame the challenges of the 1960's and 1970's of racial unrest and discrimination, not only in the city of Toledo but also in the West Ohio Conference. Led by Rev. Reed, Braden continued to face the challenges of a changing society and community with confidence and courage. In 1986 the Bishop moved Rev. Reed away from Braden United Methodist Church.

**HISTORY OF BRADEN**  
**FOURTH 25 YEARS**  
**1984 – 2008**

As Rev. Albert L. Reed's leadership continued from one-quarter century into the next quarter century and his name became well known in the community and within the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Churches. He was the youngest pastor ever assigned to Braden United Methodist Church.

Pastor Reed was an activist for equal rights, not only for the black race but also for all people and opened the first black owned bookstore in the City of Toledo. Many Sundays, the Black Panthers would attend the worship service because of Pastor Reed's involvement in the black community. Sunday after Sunday the congregation overflowed to the balcony and the overflow room.

For the first time since the merger to United Methodist the conference experienced the leadership of two African American men, Bishop Edsel Ammons as the Resident Bishop of WOC and at the Toledo District level Rev. Vance Sumner as District Superintendent. Rev. Fred Heath became our second African American District Superintendent over the Toledo District.

Following Pastor Reed's 20-year leadership, in 1986 Bishop Edsel Ammons appointed Rev. William C. Davis, whose quiet but forceful demeanor continued to keep Braden in the forefront of the community. Pastor Davis, with his family, worked diligently to ensure that all the ministries continued to be effective. Two of the most important programs that were developed under his leadership with the assistance of Mildred Oglesby were "Save Our Boys" under the guidance of Calvin White and the Toledo Ecumenical Youth Council, which met weekly under the guidance of Yolanda Robinson and Rahwae Shuman.

Braden purchased a new parsonage and its first church van. After 10 years of serving the congregation, Bishop Judith Craig appointed Pastor Davis to Calvary United Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1996, Pastor Roland J. Moore and his family came and brought with him the spirit of the future. He wanted to see Braden grow into the church that God had called it to be and set up program ministries to accomplish that goal. The youth attended the annual conferences and were involved in the Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR) attending the Ministerial Recruitment Institute (MRI) each year to learn of God's goodness, worshiping and socializing with other Christian youth and a liturgical dance team was organized.

Dr. Margaret Mallory was the first African American woman appointed District Superintendent and under her leadership many members of Braden served on district committees: Rev. Moore and Marie Bush – Nominations, Marie Bush and Eva Tucker-Lingo Superintendent Committee, Charles Tuggle – District Trustees, Annette Savage - Building and Relocation, Gloria Layson and Kenneth Dantzler also served. Gloria Layson is currently District Lay Leader and Marie Bush has served as chair of Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries and now serves on the Board of Ministries and Vice Chair of the Episcopacy Committee that advises and consults with the Bishop.

## **HISTORY OF BRADEN FOURTH 25 YEARS** *(Continued)*

During the 89th Homecoming celebration in 1997, Rev. Merrill E. Nelson who served Braden from 1959-1966 was honored with the overflow room being named the Merrill E. Nelson Fellowship Hall.

In 1998, Pastor Moore had two major surgeries. During his period of convalescence, Minister Emma J. Collins (who had assisted Pastor Davis and Pastor Moore) became the interim Pastor. She served faithfully from March through June and then was appointed by the Bishop as Pastor of New Horizon UMC located on Hill Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.

In 2004, the Bishop moved Pastor Moore and family to McKinley UMC in Dayton, Ohio and brought in Pastor Donnetta Peaks as an interim pastor until a permanent pastor could be assigned to Braden. Under her leadership the "Shepherds" ministry was developed and she revived the periodic publishing of "The Steeple", Braden's newsletter.

In June, 2005, Bishop William Ough appointed Elder Wynston E. Dixon to Braden. Born in Liberia, West Africa, he was the first pastor appointed to the church that was currently residing in Toledo. Pastor Dixon brought with him a determination to biblically teach the congregation of the goodness of God and how to live as God has called. He endeavored to teach the congregation the importance of being good stewards of the resources God provides and stretching out on faith; teaching that bricks and mortar are not the temple of God, but each individual represents the temple of God and that wherever we may be, we are to seek to win souls for Christ.

Pastor Dixon, being a proponent of education encouraged the Church Council to begin a Scholarship Fund to assist persons interested in furthering their education. Members were asked to donate \$1.00 per week or \$52.00 per year. The Tween Teen program was organized to bring youth together between the ages of 9 and 12 to learn of God's goodness and the importance of assisting senior and others in need.

On May 18, 2008, during a Church Conference the congregation overwhelmingly voted to move from the building located at 2013 Lawrence Avenue and to share/utilize space with another congregation due to the extreme expenses involved in the maintenance, utility cost and overall upkeep of the building.

Being here for the centennial year has brought many challenges which Pastor Dixon has faced with patience and determination and much prayer.

The first Sunday in June kicked off the Centennial Celebration with a Memorial and Candle Lighting Ceremony for the deceased members of Braden. One Hundred Candles were lit on the altar symbolizing 100 years of ministry in the City of Toledo. Pastor Dixon's message was most appropriate taken from Philippians 4:4-13 entitled, "Look Where the Lord Has Brought Us From".

The month of September was dedicated to recognizing some of the former pastors of Braden who are still in ministry. The first Sunday in September, was in honor Rev. Albert L. Reed, and for his 20 years of service the church agreed to bestow upon him the honor of Pastor Emeritus of Braden United Methodist Church.

## **HISTORY OF BRADEN FOURTH 25 YEARS** *(Continued)*

The second Sunday in September, Rev. William C. Davis who served 10 years at Braden delivered the message "A Devine Investment" taken from the 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Pastor Davis is currently pastoring Calvary United Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The third Sunday brought Rev. Roland J. Moore who served 7 years at Braden whose message was taken from Matthew 14:22-36 "A Day at the Lake". He is currently serving as Pastor of East Glenville United Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Closing out the month of September was Rev. Donnetta Peaks who served an interim term of 6 months who took her text from Nehemiah 2:1-20, "No More Sadness". Pastor Peaks is currently pastoring Covenant United Methodist Church and Springfield Central United Methodist Church in Springfield, Ohio.

First Sunday of October was a service of Holy Communion and a candle lighting ceremony for Mental Illness in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week. Pastor Dixon's message was taken from Matthew 21:33-46 entitled "Will You Also Reject God?"

A formal banquet was held at the Clarion Hotel Ballroom on Friday, October 10, 2008, where many Government officials were in attendance and the guest speaker was Rev. Dr. Zan W. Holmes, Former Professor of Preaching, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX. Saturday, October 11, 2008, Rev. Dr. Holmes held a Bible Study class at Braden.

The culmination of the centennial celebration on Sunday, October 12, 2008 will bring again the dynamic Rev. Dr. Zan W. Holmes as the guest preacher. Bishop Duane Tisdale and Friendship Baptist Church will be our guest preacher and choir at a 5:00pm evening worship service.

Over the past 100 years, many outstanding persons have come out of Braden, as well as several pastors and ministers including Pastors Josephine Whitely-Fields, Theodore Whitely, Donald Murray, Emma Collins, Waverly Early, James Christopher Matthews, and Saroya King; Ministers Sylvia Williams, Andre' Ballard, Morell Fonfield, Gloria Layson, Janet Orr, and Bessie Jennings (deceased) just to name a few.

A profound teacher of the scriptures, steeped in biblical knowledge, Pastor Dixon endeavors to share his biblical knowledge with his parishioners each and every Sunday as God directs his path for him and Braden into the next 100 years.

## **HISTORY OF BRADEN** **The Beginning of the Next 100 Years**

On March 31, 2009 the Maumee Watershed District's proposal for the relocation of Braden Methodist Church was presented at the Special Charge Conference of the Braden Church. The proposal stated its intent to gift the Asbury United Methodist Church property located at 4725 Dorr Street, Toledo to the Braden United Methodist Church following the closure of Asbury UMC on June 21, 2009 and therefore expedite the transfer of the deed of said property to the Braden UMC. This gift was offered contingent upon the West Ohio Board of Trustees' approval on April 21, 2009. By a conference vote of 96 to accept the proposal and one not to accept the proposal, it was accepted. All procedures were completed in a timely manner and the property was deeded to Braden on June 23, 2009 at approximate 10:00am. In attendance were District Superintendent Marla Brown, Attorney Chris Steiner, Asbury's Pastor Phil Park-Thomas, Keith Schlender, Chairperson Church Council, Ralph Brunner, Trustee Chairperson, Braden's Pastor Wynston E. Dixon, Charles Tuggle, Chairperson Church Council, Marie Bush, Treasurer, Arthur Hill, Trustee Chairperson and Annette M. Savage, Lay Leader.

As we accepted this generous gift, we wanted the congregation of Asbury to know that they were certainly welcome to worship with us and be a part of this new beginning; and that we would cherish the works of their hands and be good stewards of their labor. What a blessing it would be if we could come together as a truly diverse congregation.

Asbury had their final service on June 21<sup>st</sup>, to which Pastor Dixon was invited to participate as a former pastor. It was a great celebration with the Maumee Watershed District Superintendent in attendance, together with other District officials and former pastors of Asbury.

Braden's last service at the 2013 Lawrence Avenue location was held on June 28<sup>th</sup>, beginning with the regular morning worship service at 10:30am where many former members and persons who have not been in worship for some time were in attendance.

At 6:00pm a special worship service was held with the Interfaith Mass Choir, under the direction of Minister Derrick Roberts providing the music for the evening. The District Superintendent, Rev. Marla Brown and persons who had gone into the ministry as a result of their participation and influence during their time at Braden, such as Pastor Kenneth Dantzler, Minister Emma Collins, Pastor Waverly Earley, Minister Doris Abrams and Minister Janet Orr were in attendance. Reflections from the past were shared by various members and one former Pastor, Reverend Albert L. Reed (read by his wife, Roylene). As the service ended, the pulpit and altar were "undressed" by the Acolytes and the Communion Stewards and as the lights dimmed in the sanctuary, Pastor Dixon gave the benediction and exited the sanctuary as the doxology was sung by the Interfaith Mass Choir. This closed the chapter of history at the 2013 Lawrence Avenue, Toledo, Ohio location.

### **The Beginning of the Next 100 Years** *(Continued)*

Braden continued their life in the new area (4725 Dorr Street, Toledo, Ohio) by having a cookout on Saturday, July 4<sup>th</sup> to let the surrounding community know that they are welcome to fellowship and worship with them as they become a permanent fixture in this new community.

Braden's first Sunday worship service at the 4725 Dorr Street location began on July 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am with Holy Communion. All choirs sang on this first Sunday and set the standard for every first Sunday to follow. The official rededication was at 5:00pm with our own Bishop Bruce Ough as guest speaker. At that time the keys to the facility were officially turned over to our Lay Leader, Annette M. Savage by District Superintendent, Marla Brown.

Special thanks to Charles Tuggle and members of the Church Council, Clyde Calhoun and the transition team and to all the praying warriors who kept us in prayer during this transition. Special thanks to all the dedicated members of Braden for all of their cooperation and hard work during this transition and move.

Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Bishop Bruce Ough, our District Superintendent, Rev. Marla Brown, Mike Denman, Assistant DS, Pastor Phil Park-Thomas, Pastor of Asbury, Lisa Gleason, Secretary of Asbury and Ralph Brunner, Trustee Chair at Asbury, Art Hill, Trustee Chair at Braden, Cerssandra McPherson, move organizer and trustee at Braden and all of the Braden members for making this transition as smooth as possible. We could not have accomplished this transitional move without the help of many of the Braden members who gracefully gave of their time and energy to make it happen. Everyone worked very hard to see that the Sanctuary and other rooms would be ready for worship on Sunday morning. God has blessed us with a great harvest and He also provided the laborers to get the tasks done.

We are depending on God to carry us through to do His will as we look forward to the future.

With God all things are possible.

***“We Have Come This Far By Faith!”***