

My name is Mary Dexter Wagner. I have been a member since about 1947.

Here is my memory of First Church:

My Recollections of First Church Baldwin Methodist Mary Dexter Wagner My earliest recollection of First Church was going to Sunday school in a little house on Prospect Street. Mrs. Ruth Transom was my teacher and I remember singing "Jesus Loves Me" every week. My father Franklin Dexter was a Quaker and my mother was a Presbyterian. First Church was "right up the street" and thus became our family church. I attended confirmation class and was confirmed by Dr. Henry Whyman. I remember that I had never been baptized, so I was baptized at the age of 12 by Dr. Whyman. I remember the boys teasing me that Dr. Wyman would pick me up and hold me like a baby to be baptized. A large part of my high school years revolved around the church. During Lent we would get up very early on Wednesday mornings and before school would attend Lenten services in various churches in town. Easter Sunday we would attend the Sunrise Service at Silver Lake Park. We attended Sunday school every Sunday morning (no soccer, etc. then), would go across the street to the "candy store", have hot chocolate or coffee, and return for the 11:00 church service every Sunday! We would then all go home, do our homework, and return at 7 pm for MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship). Every week we'd have a religious service, followed by some type of program. It was up to us, the youth, to put the service and program together. We were such an active group that kids from other churches came to our MYF. Our MYF was instrumental in the origin of the living crèche, which was performed 3 times a day in the week leading up to Christmas. We'd sign up for the various time slots and characters. My husband Wayne, who attended St. Peter's Lutheran Church and I used to love to play Mary and Joseph! The beautiful costumes were all made by Miss Moon, who lived on Park Aye, down from the church. I remember us all going across the street to the police precinct one night, fully costumed, to report our camels missing!!! What innocent fun we had!! Still today, when I hear Montevanni's Christmas album I am reminded of that music playing when we did the crèche so many years ago. Our MYF would hold retreats at Camp Quinipet on Shelter Island. To raise money for the retreats we held spaghetti suppers. My father was the cook for the dinners and we would serve several dinners at a time! Our MYF advisors, several parents and my parents as cooks would accompany us on the retreat. My father would contact the best cake bakers in the congregation and have them bake cakes for our retreat. My job was to drive all around Baldwin the day before the retreat and pick up cakes to take on the retreat. The church and MYF were such a part of my teen age years and I thank such dedicated leaders as Bruce Lister, Doris Liebethruth, Mr. and Mrs. Graham Raad, Rev. Eldred Bucklew and Dr. Whyman, Rev. Benedict and Rev. Fowler, our ministers over the years. My parents had set an example early on for me and my brothers Tom and Richard, by being involved in the church. They were active members in the Mr. and Mrs. Club. I have posted a photo of the Mr. and Mrs. Club, which was taken sometime in the 1950's. They were both involved in scouting, my mom was involved in the women's club and my father in raising funds for the church. The lighted cross over the entrance door to the right of the church is lit in his memory. My husband Wayne and I were married in First Church by Rev. Eugene Fowler 47 years ago this June. I am still in close touch with several people whom I have known since my early days at First Church, some 64 years ago! I pray that in the last 200 years of the church and hopefully in the next 200 years of the church others may have had the religious foundation and experiences that I had at First Church Baldwin Methodist. Congratulations to all who came before us and those who are yet to come on the 200th Anniversary of the church.