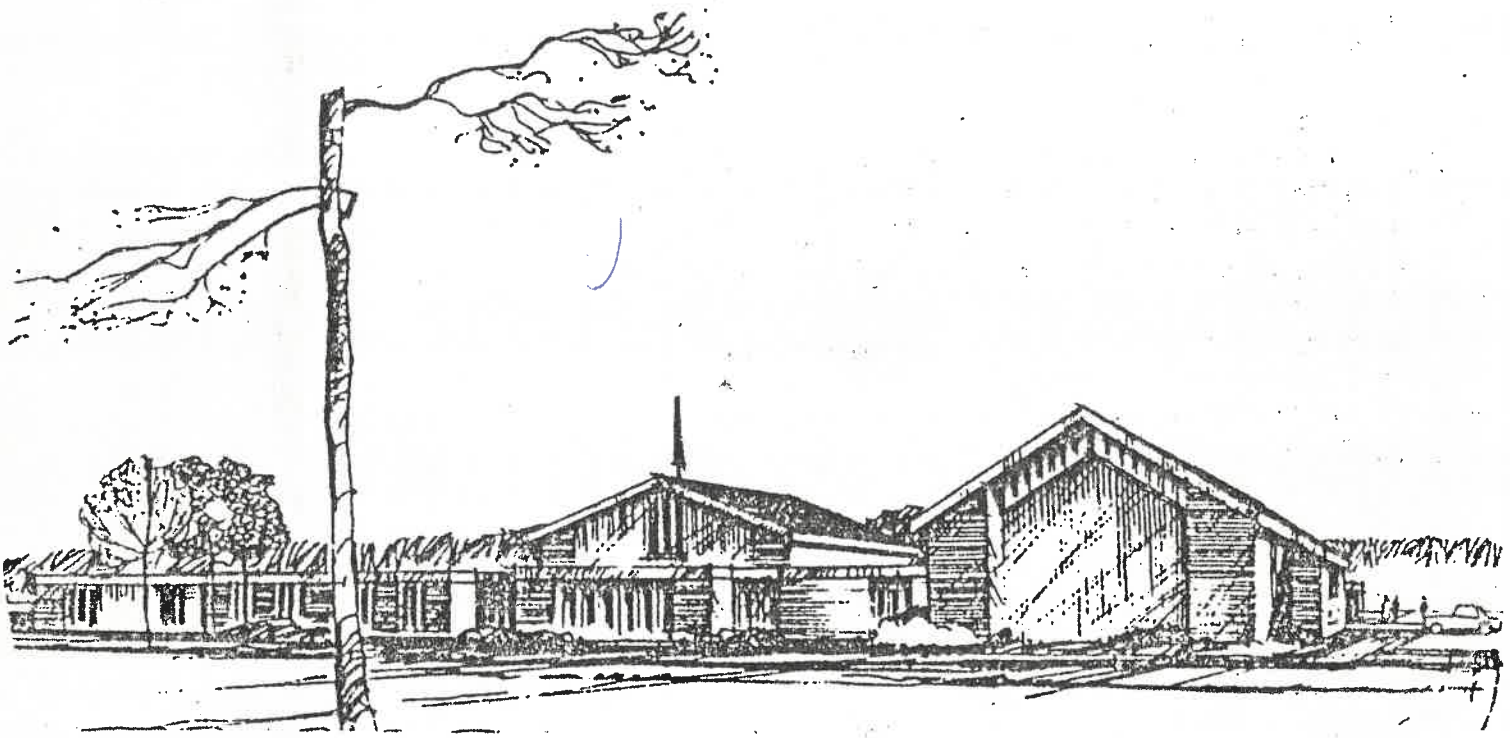
JOURNEYING ON...



A History of

FIELDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

North Ridgeville, Ohio

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To So Great a Cloud of Witnesses
Saints who have gone before us,
Saints who are beside us, around us, even us,
Ushers into a New Age:

Passing on the faith, flickering and burning brighter
Building these buildings, but breaking down the walls that divide us
Preaching the Word in an uncertain world
Singing the songs of salvation in season and out
Assuring us in our valleys, rejoicing at our mountaintops
Challenging us to come out of our caves of apathy
Following a cross, not an illusory star
Loving us into all we're meant to be--the Children of God
Equipping us with the courage to be faithful, forgiving when we're not
Coming this far by faith, leaning on the Lord

Journeying on, journeying on...



A History of
FIELDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
North Ridgeville, Ohio

(Revised October 1985)

As our congregation marks the 160th anniversary of "Methodism at Fields Corners," we at Fields United Methodist Church are justly proud of our recently-expanded, modern house of worship; as well as our personable, energetic pastor, now in his unprecedented twelfth year of service -- the 89th minister to fill the Fields pulpit. Our church staff, leaders and committees actively develop and implement our mission-oriented goals. We are seeing more innovations and participation in our fellowship opportunities, community outreach, and Christian education programming.

This is a time for rejoicing in our accomplishments of past months -- and a time for further planning and working together, toward our common future in serving God. It is also a time for reflection on our church's early years. This brief narrative attempts to chronicle the story of the scores of men and women who have worked and prayed to shape the life of this congregation -- a church called Fields.

The history of a church is the story of its congregation. In order to tell this story, we should first explore the origins of the community in which the church began. The founders of Fields United Methodist Church were among the pioneer families of Ridgeville Township in Lorain County, a section of Connecticut's Western Reserve -- a tract of land in the northeast corner of the Ohio wilderness. Ridgeville's history dates from about seven years after the formation of the state, and just three years after the first settlement in Lorain County.

When the first dozen white settlers arrived in Township number six of Range sixteen in the Western Reserve, on May 10, 1810 (just over 175 years ago), they began a quick adjustment to a life very different from that of their quiet New England homes and villages. The future City of North Ridgeville was a densely-wooded wilderness of swamps and rattlesnakes, prowling wolves and bears, an occasional Indian hunting party, and sandy ridges running east and west across the township -- ancient shores of Lake Erie.

Massive trees covered the entire area: butternut, walnut, chestnut and maple along the ridges; oak, elm, ash, whitewood and hickory in the swamplands. An old Indian trail crossed the township on a northwesterly course, from Columbia Township to the lake. This trail was later named Root Road, after the original owner of Ridgeville, Mr. Ephraim Root of the Connecticut Land Company. The first cabin was built near a trail through the woods which was called Lounsborough Road in the early 1800s, and was later renamed Bainbridge Road.

Settlers from New England continued to trickle into the new township during the 'teens and 'twenties. New roads and farms were cleared of trees, log cabins were built, swamps were drained, wells were dug, and the wild animals and Indians gradually moved west. The second party of settlers destined for Ridgeville took a "shortcut" from the Rocky River through the forest -- a 12-mile journey that took four days to complete.

A "British scare" during the War of 1812 sent all families in the area fleeing for safety to the nearby Columbia blockhouse, but it was only a false alarm. The British soldiers were merely unloading prisoners near Huron, and had no idea there were American cabins in the forests of Ridgeville or Columbia. It was said, however, that cannon fire during the Battle of Lake Erie (in September, 1813) could be heard distinctly by the settlers.

Other stories of the early days of Ridgeville deal with trips from New England by oxen or on foot, persons lost in the woods for days at a time, visits by Indians, bear sightings and the like. The manner in which these pioneers faced and endured hardships speaks highly of their independent spirit and of the community to be formed by them and their descendants.

In coming to the Western Reserve, these men and women brought with them the best traditions and customs of their New England home. Religious services were conducted on the first Sunday after their arrival, and were continued in the homes of settlers for several years until a church group was organized in 1822 to meet in the schoolhouse at the center of Ridgeville Township. This congregation called themselves "The First Presbyterian Church of Ridgeville" (now the First Congregational United Church of Christ).

Three years later, in 1825, a group of seven people met and organized the society which now exists as Fields United Methodist Church. The members of the original "class" were: Wilson and Hannah Blaine, Elijah and Eliza Rigby, and Mr. and Mrs. Harris Emmons and daughter. John and Sylvia (Reed) Kibby joined the class the following year. Both of them lived to become our first fifty-year members. Wilson Blaine was the first class leader, and for many years the meetings were held in his log cabin at the corner of present-day Bagley Road and Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road).

By all accounts, the group met without the direction of an ordained minister during its first year and a half of existence. At this time, the class had no specific denominational identity, but probably met weekly to study the Bible, pray, and sing hymns. It is not recorded whether or not the Blaines or the other families brought an organ or other musical instruments with them to their new home.

Organized Methodism in America had its beginning in 1784 in Baltimore, Maryland, when John Wesley's hand-picked bishops and other followers formed the Methodist Episcopal Church (which existed under that name for over 150 years). It was about 40 years after this birth of American Methodism, at Lovely Lane Church in Baltimore, that the first representatives of the denomination reached the "frontier" of Lorain County, Ohio.

Methodism was first introduced to the Ohio frontier in the form of "circuits." These were areas under the preaching supervision of one or two circuit riders. Circuits in Ohio were large at first, sometimes covering three or more counties. Religious needs of a settlement were met between visits by regular class meetings. Consequently, growth of the local church was based largely on strong lay leadership. The early circuit riders appeared at each meeting place as little as one day a month (and seldom on a Sunday).

In 1824, the Black River Circuit was created from the old Huron Circuit. The new circuit included all Methodist Episcopal classes between the western boundary of the Firelands (Erie and Huron Counties) and the Cuyahoga River, and from Lake Erie south to Wayne County. If a Methodist rider visited a meeting at Wilson Blaine's cabin as early as 1825, it was either the Rev. James Taylor, assigned to the Black River Circuit in 1824-25, or Elijah H. Field, who covered the route in 1825-26.

According to tradition, however, the first visit to the small congregation was early in 1827, by the Rev. Henry O. Sheldon. Records show that the Black River Circuit in 1827 included 231 members ("225 white and 6 colored"), and that it was part of the Ohio Conference (formed in 1812), which extended into parts of Michigan, Virginia, and Kentucky.

Rev. Sheldon (born Henry Olcott Sheldon on September 15, 1799, in Conn.) came to Ohio in May, 1818, from New York State. He settled on a Huron County farm, married Ruth Bradley (his first wife), and entered the Methodist Episcopal ministry in December, 1823. Rev. Sheldon eventually fathered 12 children, by three wives. He died December 21, 1882, and is buried in Oberlin. In about 1940, one of his granddaughters presented the Firelands Historical Society in Norwalk with his original journals, covering the years 1817 to 1882. It was in several of these 58 leather-bound volumes that documentation of the earliest history of Fields Church was located. Entries pertaining to North Ridgeville and Fields history include the following:

January 11, 1827 "There has been no regular preaching on the Black River Circuit since September."

February 21, 1827 "Rode to Blane's (Wilson Blaine's cabin). I feel a great desire for a revival -- wrote to a member who had backslid and neglected class for a year."

March 15, 1827 "... preached at Ridgeville, left my horse and walked to Avon & tried to preach from John. There must be an over-turning here or the devil will have the greatest half of the class."

April 4, 1827 "Rode to Blane's ... one joined -- several appear under awakening. Two Baptists united with us at Communion lately."

April 25, 1887 "Rode to Blane's. There is a spirit of inquiry, but two cannot humble themselves enough to have religion."

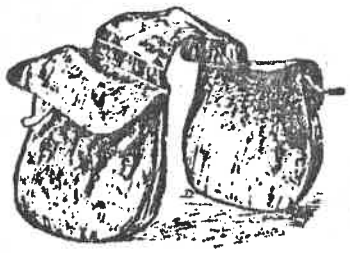
May 17, 1827 "Rode to Ridgeville ... gave a man two cents to go to meeting after trying every other method to persuade him."

August 8, 1827 "A member has brought scandal upon the cause. Rode to Blane's. As I rode through Ridgeville, just before I came to the house of Maj. (David) Beebe, happening to turn my head, I saw a man walking quickly with a club in his hand. Having heard that Maj. Beebe had

threatened to whip me if I came there when he was at home (his anger having been caused by my giving him a tract and his wife having been awakened), I immediately mistrusted who it was, although I did not personally know him ... I therefore rode slow -- that he might pass me by. I turned up to his house and seeing some young people drinking at a well, I asked if I could get a drink of water. On being answered in the affirmative, I dismounted and while I was drinking, he came by with the club and walked in the house. Words immediately commenced between him and his wife. I left a tract and went on. Read a tract at Blane's."



H. O. Sheldon



Circuit Riders

The heroes of early United Methodism in this country were the circuit rider preachers.

The circuit riders did not stay long in one place. Their home was their horse as they traveled from community to community and from home to home. When they were invited to sleep inside a cabin, they did. When there was no invitation, they slept outside. Barns, cabins, and fields were the only churches they had.



August 14, 1827 "Rode on through Ridgeville ... as I rode, a man on a haystack near the road requested me to ride up to the fence, for he wanted to speak with me. I rode up and stopped my horse. He began abusing & swearing, calling me fool -- almost everything that was bad for some time. When he paused, I mildly asked him if he had anything further to say. His complaint was my leaving tracts at houses when the men were not at home. He dared me to give a tract to him & to get over the fence and he would thrash me. I told him I sought no quarrel -- I had a tract 'The Swearer's Prayer' if he wanted one. By this time, he came down from the haystack with a broken pitchfork in his hand, getting over the fence. I began reading 'The Swearer's Prayer.' He came near and made a pass to knock the tract out of my hand. I read on. He then struck with great violence at my head. Providentially, the blow hit just above my head on the empty part of my hat, knocking it some distance. He went off. I read on. He moderated down. His brother came and picked up my hat and brought it to me. I finished the tract, bade him farewell, forgave him, (and) prayed to God to bless him."

December 3, 1827 "Passed through Ridgeville ... considering how much persecution I had here, I rode on humming to myself, 'O Bless the Lord my Soul ...'"

December 31, 1827 "Looking over (my notes) I find I have traveled 3,805 miles during the year. But, alas, how little progress has religion."

H. O. Sheldon

It should be mentioned that when Rev. Sheldon spoke of "Ridgeville," he was referring to Ridgeville Center (Center Ridge and Avon-Belden Roads), as opposed to "Blane's" at Bagley Road and Butternut Ridge (or Lorain Road).

Rev. H. O. Sheldon was also instrumental in a rather large-scale enterprise about nine years after he last preached at Blaine's log cabin. Along with a Rev. James Gilruth and Mr. John Baldwin (founder of the Baldwin University, later renamed Baldwin-Wallace College), Rev. Sheldon in 1836 helped to establish a religious education-based "Lyceum community" near the S-shaped bend of the Rocky River in southwest Middleburg Township. The community was called "Water Town" for a time; and then "Stockdale." But by September, 1836, a permanent name for a proposed post office (and, ultimately, the village itself) had to be chosen.

Rev. Gilruth proposed that the new post office and community be called "Tabor," after the mountain of that name near Jerusalem. Sheldon, however, favored the name of a city mentioned in the book of Acts, "Berea." To settle the matter, John Baldwin first produced a half dollar. The two pastors then chose "heads or tails," Mr. Baldwin tossed the coin, and Rev. Sheldon's choice ("heads") prevailed. He also became the new village's first postmaster (1837-49), and helped to build Berea's first grist mill. Sheldon Street in Berea was named after him, and Henry Street was named for his son, Henry Sheldon, Jr.

Toward the close of 1827, the Rev. Sheldon was assisted on the circuit by a "junior preacher," Rev. Ansel Brainard. They were replaced in 1827-29 by Shadrach Ruark and John C. Havens. For the next 75 years or so, the circuit including Wilson Blaine's class was assigned a new rider every year or two.

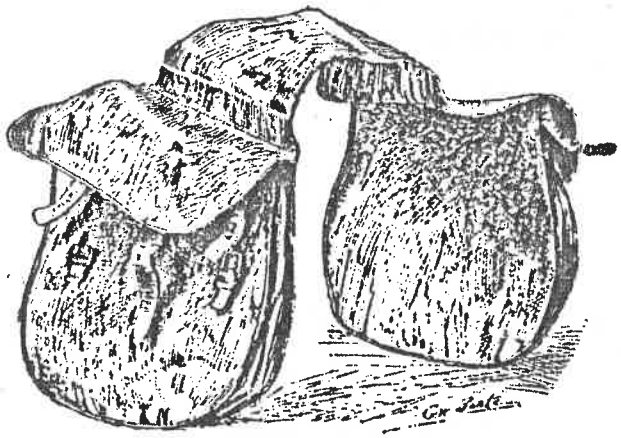
The Rev. Cyrus Carpenter and a 20-year-old assistant preacher, H. Colclazer, were appointed to the circuit in 1829. Colclazer left after one year to ride a larger circuit in the Michigan Territory. He later became Presiding Elder of his district, and the first librarian at the University of Michigan.

Cyrus Carpenter was joined on the Black River Circuit in 1830 by the Rev. Elnathan Corrington Gavitt, an enthusiastic 22-year-old preacher on his first regular appointment. Rev. Gavitt, who was born in Granville, Ohio, gave his first sermon at the age of 11 and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church at 18. In 1833, he married Sophia J. Halsey, the first school teacher in Amherst, Ohio (where they made their home for a number of years).

Rev. E. C. Gavitt's career was destined to rise markedly from his $75-a-year position on the Black River Circuit. As a young circuit rider along the Mississippi River, Elnathan counted among his membership Col. Zachary Taylor (future General and 12th U.S. President). During his 66-year ministry, Dr. Gavitt served as Presiding Elder, agent for Ohio Wesleyan University, co-organizer of the Central Ohio Conference, and chaplain at a Toledo hospital (in his March, 1896, obituary, it was stated that Elnathan Gavitt gave the first sermon ever heard in Toledo). His preaching was rated among the best in America in the mid-1800s. Blaine's small congregation was fortunate to have been visited, if only briefly, by such a dynamic speaker.

In his autobiography, "Crumbs from My Saddle Bags," Rev. Gavitt made several references to his start on the Black River Circuit, and about the preachers' salaries. He wrote, "In 1830 I was assigned to the Black River Circuit in company with Cyrus S. Carpenter, an excellent Christian brother of ordinary ministerial ability. He was favored with a superior educated companion and a very kind and sweet dispositioned lady. She was a valuable accession to the charge, and contributed largely to the usefulness of her husband."

The presiding elders of the church discouraged marriage for their "saddle bag preachers." Some of the congregations on the circuits were also against it, because their donations must of necessity be larger to support the rider's family which often rode along with him. In 1830 the salary for a married preacher was $200 a year; for an unmarried one, $100 (for a junior preacher, $75). There was occasionally a problem, too, in where to house these people ("You take them this trip. I have company coming and my 'young-uns' are half sick.").



At one time Rev. Gavitt tried to start a small Methodist class in the village of Oberlin, but met resistance from the College, which had already established a church of the "preferred" denomination, Congregational. Mr. Finney of the College wanted "to keep the place free from any conflicting influences." Mr. Gavitt responded, "Well, my good brother, that may be alright and the best thing for your church and the institution, but it was somewhat unfortunate that the Lord had not been informed of that fact in time. Then He would have said, 'Go ye into all the world and preach My Gospel to every creature -- except in Oberlin.' There they want the exclusive right of (Congregational) church membership, and no Methodist interference whatever." The class was started soon thereafter, with 20 members.

In 1830, Otis Briggs came to Ridgeville from New England, purchasing land some distance west of Blaine's cabin, adjacent to the corner of Butternut Ridge and Root Roads. The area soon came to be known as "Briggs' Corners"; and the Briggs family, for several generations, were active members and leaders of the Methodist congregation there.

In late 1831, the Black River Circuit was divided into the new Elyria and Norwalk Circuits when it was calculated that its membership exceeded 660 persons. Rev. William Runnels, 29, was assigned to the Elyria Circuit, which would serve the Briggs' Corners class. Runnels, a Maine abolitionist, later helped to found the Baldwin University (now Baldwin-Wallace College) in Berea. Appointed as his junior preacher was George Elliot, age 21, from England (who died at the age of 30). Thirty-year-old John Kinnear replaced Elliot the next year (1832).

Alvin Billings and James Brewster were assigned to the circuit in 1833. Rev. Billings continued to preach in Ohio and Michigan until his retirement during the Civil War (1863). Brewster, age 24, left the ministry in the winter of 1833-34 due to poor health. Early the following spring, his saddle was filled by the Rev. John Wilkinson.

In about 1835, the Briggs' Corners congregation began holding their Sunday services at the local schoolhouse, instead of the Blaines' log cabin. The log school building was located about 150 feet south of the present Fields-Sweet Elementary School on Root Road. This one-room school was within a short time by a frame structure.

The year 1835 also saw the appointment of James Wheeler, 34, and Thomas Barkdull, a 22-year old bachelor, to the Elyria Circuit (in 1836, Rev. Barkdull married Caroline Hendry of Elyria). Rev. Wheeler later became president of Baldwin-Wallace, and Barkdull eventually served as Presiding Elder at Mount Vernon, Ohio (where he died in 1869). Both men had attended Norwalk Seminary. In 1836, our part of the old Ohio Conference was acquired by the newly-formed Michigan Conference, of which we would remain a part for only four years' time.

The late 1830s saw the start of much change in the routes of the circuits, brought about by increased membership in the frontier settlements and villages. Elyria became a "station" in 1837, and the remainder of the six-year-old Elyria Circuit (400 members) were divided between the Vermilion and the Dover (Westlake) Circuits. The Briggs' Corners M. E. Church was apparently consigned to the Dover Circuit for several years.

Throughout the 1800s, each traveling preacher was replace annually by the Conference, and placed in another circuit. The rough terrain, lack of roads and bridges, inclement Ohio weather, and general discomfort of the saddle often took their toll. In the 1837-38 Conference minutes, our former pastors Shadrach Ruark and Alvin Billings were listed as "worn-out preachers" -- as was Thomas Barkdull, the following year.

Our portion of the Michigan Conference was absorbed in 1840 by the new North Ohio Conference, to which our church and district belonged for 72 years (1840-1912). Records show that in 1843, the Presiding Elder of the district including the Briggs' Corners church was the Rev. Adam Poe. One historian said of Poe, "His name is a household word in every Methodist home in this region -- a man of Herculean frame, and an able, earnest, and effective preacher."

Root Road originally crossed Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road) a little further to the west (just west of the old Fields Church); but in the 1830s, Otis Briggs had the road straightened to give his home and stage-coach inn a corner location (the two-story white frame building still standing on the northeast corner). In 1848, land on the southwest corner was purchased from Mr. Briggs for a "consideration" of $40. A copy of the original deed is preserved among the papers of the church.

This parcel of land became the site, two years later (1850), of the Briggs' Corners M. E. Church members' first permanent meeting place. The new church was a frame structure situated near the location of the present building (now owned by Faith Baptist Temple). Trustees of the church at that time, according to the 1848 deed, were: Wilson Blaine, Richard Blaine, John Bainbridge, William Bainbridge, and John Kibby.

By the 1840s and 1850s, Ridgeville was becoming an "industrial community" -- it boasted of saw and cider mills, tanneries, cheese factories and blacksmith shops, and even an iron mine. Throughout the mid-1800s, a number of the pioneer farms in southeast Ridgeville Township were bought up in an influx of English immigrants to the area. Many of these families became members of the growing church at Briggs' Corners. During this same period, due to a constant increase in the number of congregations, continuous change took place in the circuit containing the present-day Fields Church. Eventually, an Olmsted Falls Circuit was formed, and our small church was assigned to its "saddle preacher."

During the pastorate of Rev. Dissette, in 1875, some eight or nine members of the church, including some whose connection with it embraced a period of nearly fifty years, were expelled for non-attendance. The expelled members, who had absented themselves for the reason of "dissent from the doctrines of the pastor," along with a similar number who withdrew from the church, were organized in February, 1876, by a Rev. Bell, into a class under the name of "Free Methodists." Their meetings were held at the schoolhouse and at the home of Henry Dickson, until they erected a permanent house of worship further west on Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road), in the summer of 1876. This Free Methodist Church was apparently a fairly short-lived organization.

An Englishman, Gilbert Fields, moved his family to Briggs' Corners in the middle-to-late 1800s, and established his home in a large Victorian house on the northwest corner of the intersection. The community's stone horse-watering trough was on the corner of his property. Mr. Fields opened a general store immediately west of the Methodist church, probably in the 1870s. In January, 1881, when he received permission to open the area's first and only post office (1881-1908), the government notified him that another Ohio post office already bore the name "Briggs" -- so he chose the name "Fields." The community soon became known as Fields Corners; and the church, Fields M. E. Church.

In 1882, under the pastorate of Rev. Bennias Hushour, the church was repaired and reshingled. New sheds were built on the west side, near Gilbert Fields' store. Everyone was "rejoicing in the improvements." The remodeled church had been used but one Sunday when, near 2:00 a.m., March 9th, fire broke out in the store, quickly spreading to the sheds and the church. All were completely destroyed. (Gilbert Fields later rebuilt his store on the corner property immediately east of the church; his family became active church members and leaders for many years.)

The church building was not covered by insurance, and the members of the congregation were so discouraged that they talked of disbanding. However, they accepted instead the generous offer to use the Free Methodist Church, about half a mile to the west, as a temporary meeting place. A subscription paper was then circulated, and the people responded liberally.

An imposing church built just east of Avon in 1836 by the members of the Avon Congregational Church, which had stood empty for years, was purchased by the Fields members for $1,500. The timbers were moved to the site of the burned-out building, and this "edifice of massive construction" became the basis of the present structure. Thirty wagon loads of lumber were hauled by five men during the week-long move from Avon to Fields Corners.

The whole neighborhood turned out to help while the frame was being set up. The bents of the frame were so heavy that the men couldn't raise them above their heads. Henry Southwick, the head foreman of the project, let them make the attempt, without success -- then rigged his tackle, and the bents were soon in place.

During the reconstruction, meals were served daily by the ladies of Fields M. E. Church. The good feeling aroused by the social life of this event did much to "cement the bonds of Christian love" and insure the later growth of the church. Evidently, the work proceeded quickly; for on June 22, 1882, less than four months after the fire, the Elyria Republican (forerunner of the Chronicle-Telegram) reported the following: "The ladies of Butternut Ridge held a strawberry and ice cream festival in the new hall at Fields Corners, last Thursday evening, and although the strawberries failed to arrive in time, they took in upwards of $80, most of which was profit."

Dedication ceremonies took place on September 17, 1882, with Elyria's Rev. Thomas C. Warner performing the service. All debts had been paid in full by this time -- a noteworthy accomplishment. Rev. Hushour recorded the names of some of the persons who were most helpful in the enterprise. They were: Joseph Nye, John Brinker, William Palmer, Fannie Blaine, Warren Blaine, and Richard Andrews. The Elyria Republican offers a nostalgic look at the Fields Church of 1887 through the following "news" items of that year:

February 3, 1887 "Sunday, Jan. 23rd the stovepipe in the M. E. church fell down and gave the room a smutty look, but a new stovepipe and a general cleaning has changed the appearance."

June 30, 1887 "The strawberry and ice cream festival for the benefit of the M. E. Sunday School a week ago cleared $9."

July 21, 1887 "The M. E. church is receiving a coat of white paint."

September 8, 1887 "The M. E. church has been having a coat of white paint, greatly improving its appearance."

No change of any great import was made in the former Avon church building until the early 1890s. It was at about this time that the church parlors and balcony were added to better house the growing Sunday school, and to better care for the social interests of the congregation. In addition, a sheltered entrance was constructed around the front door; but this was removed after about ten years' use. In the early 1890s, a small house was either built or moved immediately west of the church. This residence served nearly 20 years as a "temporary" parsonage.

Several years after the pastorate of the Rev. G. A. Reeder (1893-94), he was made Presiding Elder of the Cleveland District. In about 1906, Dr. Reeder was approached about a possible gift to the Methodists of the "Elyria Old Ladies Home." The North Ohio Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church accepted this generous offer in 1907, and the property and operation of the Home were transferred to the Church. (Rev. Reeder was later appointed superintendent of the Home.) The name was changed in 1923 to "The Elyria Home for the Aged"; and in May of 1953, it became "The Elyria Methodist Home." A new wing added in the 1960s was named "Reeder Hall" in honor of Dr. Reeder's work.

The Union Township Sunday School Association of Ridgeville, Eaton, and Columbia held their "Annual Institute" at Fields Church on March 30, 1905, according to a program from the event. Early in the Conference Year 1906, Fields M. E. Church was separated from the Olmsted Falls Circuit and appeared as an independent station for the first time in the Conference minutes. The Annual Conference of September, 1907, meeting at Franklin Avenue Church in Cleveland, assigned the charge to the Rev. James P. Mills, a pastor then living in Berea, and the era of circuit riders at Fields came to a close -- after 80 years.

At a meeting of the Sunday School Board, held March 12, 1911, a motion was made and accepted that the "Sunday School of Fields M. E. Church be organized into a temperance society." During the pastorate of Rev. C. T. Goodwin, in 1912, a beautiful new parsonage was built at a cost of $3,000, on two acres of land donated by Warren Blaine. Each dollar that was pledged was paid. The parsonage building committee consisted of: Rev. Goodwin, John Wilford, A. W. Palmer, Harlan Blaine, William Andrews, and C. C. Benjamin. The structure, located a half mile east of the old church, was used as a parsonage by 20 Fields ministers and their families for over sixty years.

Rev. Goodwin gave the 1912 commencement invocation for the five graduates of the Ridgeville Township schools. Their motto was "Quality, not quantity." In a report of the 1912 "M.E.S.S. at Fields" (Methodist Episcopal Sunday School), it is stated that, during the year, enrollment rose to 135 from 116; the average attendance was 77 per week; and the average weekly collection was $1.25. Balance on hand at the year's end was $3.90, and the report was signed by Edna M. Andrews, Secretary.

An interesting printed report of the church treasurer for 1914-15 shows the annual budget totaling $1,083, including salaries of $800 for Rev. A. H. Perry and $60 for the church janitor. There was even an allowance of $41 for "stoves and pipes."



In 1916 a movement was started to remodel the church. Planned improvements included digging a basement, removing the old steeple and erecting a new bell tower, and adding Sunday School rooms to the west side of the church. The building committee consisted of: Rev. J. W. Cleland (chairman), A. W. Palmer, William Andrews, Harlan Blaine, Mrs. Bayard Osborne, and Mrs. Henry Baehr. Volunteers, including Rev. Cleland, August Rindfleisch, John F. Worcester, and other men of the church, undertook the task of raising the building and digging the new basement.

The cornerstone was laid on July 16, 1916, by the District Superintendent, Dr. Charles Gallimore. Rev. V. W. Wager of Oberlin delivered the principle address, and Rev. Goodwin and the Rev. Carl Gage assisted. Towards the end of construction, the old bell was reinstalled in the new belfry, and new stained glass windows, bearing the names of the church leaders, were installed. The dedication took place November 26, 1916, with Dr. E. A. Smith of Ada, Ohio, performing the service. The program for the day, including a basket dinner in the new basement and refreshments served by the Ladies' Aid Society, was planned by the Epworth League, forerunner of the present-day United Methodist Youth Fellowship. The cost of remodeling was $9,000, and it was dedicated free of debt.

At this point, the Rev. J. W. Cleland's 1916 "History of 100 Years of Methodism on Butternut Ridge," a major resource for the early history of our church, comes to an end. In the original manuscript, he closed with the following thought: "The future historian will write the history of an active, aggressive church of today whose loyal people have made possible the progress of the years. This is no time for boasting, but rather a bugle call to the larger service of Militant Methodism, which today challenges every one of its eight millions of members to move into deeper depths of God and more heroic service of men."

Dr. G. R. Mente of Fields Church addressed an open meeting of the North Ridgeville Grange held at the Town Hall, in September of 1918. He gave a lecture titled, "Around the World with a Camera," illustrated with over 125 "original stereoptican views." Dr. Mente also gave the morning prayer or welcome address at the 1918, 1919, and 1920 Fields Corners Homecomings. A note on the programs from these celebrations said that, "All Southwestern (interurban) cars will be met at Stop 54 (Root Road and Center Ridge)."

Rev. L. E. Wright of Fields gave the address of welcome at the 1921 Fields Homecoming. An address titled, "It Pays," was given by the Rev. Bennias Hushour of Norwalk, a former pastor at Fields Church (1879-82).

The Centennial of Fields M. E. Church was celebrated July 25-26, 1925. Over 250 people attended the services, basket lunch, and dinner. Rev. G. W. Houk gave his Centennial address twice on July 26th. The former pastors of Fields who participated in the celebration included: Rev. G. A. Reeder (1893-94), Rev. G. W. Houk (1899-1901), Rev. J. W. Cleland (1915-17), Rev. G. R. Mente (1917-20), Rev. B. H. Ryan (1922-24), and Rev. Kinsley and Rev. White (1924-25). The Rev. Orlando Pearce (1872-73) and Rev. W. L. Ewing (1903-05) sent letters stating that they could not attend. In honor of the celebration, Esther Pratt composed a "Centennial Song" (sung to the tune of "Swanee River").

In the mid-1920s, Rev. Merrill Chaffee and his wife participated in a play, "Safety First," to benefit the Fields Elementary School P.T.A. Mrs. Chaffee played the wife of the lead (Ralph Fortune); Rev. Chaffee took the part of "Abou ben Mocha, a Turk."

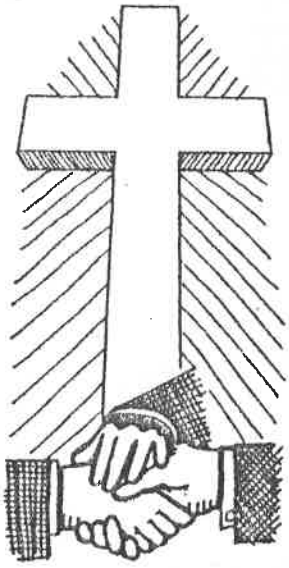
The first wedding in the remodeled church was that of Edward Henson and Doris Cheesman. The ceremony was performed on October 16, 1926, by Rev. Chaffee. At the Mother-Daughter Banquet the following March, the toastmistress was Doris Cheesman Henson. Ten men of the church -- including Rev. Chaffee -- cooked the meal. And a song or cheer written by Mrs. Chaffee was recited by the honorees: "Bum-a-lac-a, bum-a-lac-a, ba-ba-ba; Chic-a-lac-a, chic-a-lac-a, cha-cha-cha; Bum-a-lac-a, chic-a-lac-a, who are we? The Mothers and Daughters, don't you see?"

On April 17-18, 1927, the 13-member Fields Church choir, directed by Rev. Chaffee, presented a "Program of Praise" at Fields and Avon M. E. Churches. The choir was accompanied by a four-piece orchestra (violin, trombone, clarinet, and piano). A list of nominations for church trustee, presented to the 1929-30 Conference by Rev. Hubert E. Cobb, included: Henry Baehr, Lee Andrews, A. Rindfleisch, Miner Eldred, Charles Black, A. J. Hulse, A. W. Palmer, and Frank Sweet.

Items from the Sunday bulletin for May 15, 1932, included: "From 2:30-3:15 this afternoon, the Columbia Broadcasting System will broadcast addresses from the floor of the (M. E. Church) General Conference, by Bishops Wang of China, Chitambar of India, and W. F. McDowell (U.S.)." "Thursday, May 19, the Ladies Aid will hold a strawberry supper in the church. Price 25¢." At a Farmers' Institute held in the Ridgeville Grange Hall in January, 1933, the invocation was given by Rev. Koontz; community singing was led by Mrs. Koontz.

Paul Wainwright, a frequent guest soloist at Fields Church for over 30 years, sang a tenor solo at the 110th anniversary service in 1935. The May 12th program also featured a piano prelude by Miss Agnes De Lloyd, and the sermon by Rev. Rollin H. Walker of Ohio Wesleyan University. The evening service included Miss Velma Andrews playing the piano, and the program mentioned an upcoming Fourth Annual Pilgrimage to the Elyria Home for the Aged.

In 1938, the basement was redecorated at a cost of $144.50. The outside of the parsonage was painted and the first floor redecorated during the same year. At a meeting held in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church joined to form the Methodist Church. In the early 1940s, under the pastorate of Rev. Eugene E. Thompson, about one-quarter acre of the parsonage land was sold to the Ridgeville Greenhouse Company for $125. A new Hammond electric organ was installed in 1944, and the chimes in 1946. Some of the land directly across Lorain Road from the (old) church was purchased in 1945, to be used for parking.



The twentieth century has witnessed a number of church reunions. Two Evangelical factions formed the Evangelical Church in 1922. Three Methodist churches – Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, and Methodist Episcopal, South – came together in The Methodist Church in 1939. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Church created the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1946. At a uniting conference held in Dallas, Texas, in 1968, the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches became The United Methodist Church.

Velma (Andrews) Bainbridge became the "full-time" pianist at Fields in 1938, when Rev. Crawford became pastor. She had occasionally played for Sunday services since 1931, but Agnes De Lloyd was the full-time piano player when Velma Andrews replaced her. Lorna (Smith) Sweet replaced Miss Myra Simms, the part-time choir director, in 1944; and was made the church's first full-time choir director. Mrs. Sweet was choir director when the first men were added to the group, about 1960. Both Velma and Lorna assisted in raising money (house to house) for the first church organ in 1944.

One wintry night in 1950, the members of Fields Methodist Church were deservedly proud as they gathered to dedicate a new chancel. The ceremony, held February 5, 1950, observed an important milestone in the life of the church. As the ceremonial litany progressed through the dedication of the new lecturn, pulpit, altar, and other elements of the chancel, the congregation glowed with understandable pride. The youthful student-minister from Oberlin's Graduate School of Theology, Rev. Ralph E. Dessem, shared in their proud achievement. Little did the people realize, however, the extent of the exiting changes and growth to come in the next three decades at Fields Church.

The land just west of the old church building was purchased (not long after the 1882 fire) by the Disciples of Christ Church, which erected a hall there for worship services. The Disciples church building later served as the residence of James Robinson, and in the 1930s and 1940s, Mr. August Rindfleisch. For many years there were carriage sheds behind this building which were often shared by the congregations of the two churches. These sheds were later moved to the rear of the Ridgeville Town Hall on Center Ridge Road. In the 1970s, the remnants of those structures (then used as city garages) were made into the present pavillion behind the Old Town Hall.

In 1952, the Fields Church trustees purchased the Rindfleisch property at a cost of $11,000, remodeled the former Disciples church, and used the building for additional Sunday School classrooms. It was dedicated on June 7, 1953, and was called Wesley House. This structure was razed in the late 1970s after its purchase by Faith Baptist Temple. Boy Scout Troup 140 was organized at Fields Church in February, 1955, with 7 boys, by Ford Bainbridge. Mr. Bainbridge, who was active in the church as a Sunday School teacher, greeter, and member of several committees, served as leader of Ridgeville's first Scout Troop for five years; during which time the Troop size grew to nearly 40 boys. Years later, Cub Scout Pack 140 also became associated with our church.

Envisioning the need for future church expansion, on October 27, 1957, the congregation voted that the Board of Trustees take all necessary steps to purchase additional property. In 1962, during the pastorate of Rev. Richard L. Clark, the 9-acre parcel of land on which our present church is located was purchased, at a cost of $17,500. Later that year, plans were formulated to establish a drive to raise initial construction funds for the new building. A goal of $25,000 was set. Through two fund-raising campaigns between 1963 and 1967, the members of the church pledged more than double this initial amount; in addition, over $13,000 was pledged toward the operating budget.

An ever-popular form of community fellowship at Fields Church has been the church dinner. As far back as anyone can remember, the members of various clubs or committees (usually women's groups) have cooked delicious chicken, pork chop, and (recently) roast beef dinners -- always with home-baked pies and cakes! They also "put on" many luncheons and dinners for wedding receptions, open houses, graduation parties, etc. As a comparison of income from such events, one wedding reception in 1955 netted a profit of $72.16 (the charge was $2.50 per guest); a 1977 reception cost $4.00 per guest, and brought in $525.48 profit. Both dinners served 175 people.

Several record books have been saved which give details (even some recipes) from dinners served between 1955 and 1980, by the Evening Star Circle, Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), and the United Methodist Women. At the risk of neglecting the names of some people who were also active in these or other groups during the same period, we list here the women (and some men) who helped with the cooking, serving, or clean-up regularly between 1955 and 1975 (there are just too many names between 1975 and 1980 to list everyone):

Eleanor Palczer
Margaret Lyndes
Christine Remy
Shirley Worcester
Agnes Mitchell
Cleo Myers
Laura Reed
LaVerne Wolfe
Dorothy Short
Mary Rofe
Faye Hornbeck
Doris Henson
Bette & Bert Bridge
Devona & Bob Grundy
Joyce & Bill Reinhart
Velma & Ford Bainbridge
Charlotte & Harry Morgan
Joan & Harry Chalmers
Margie & Tom Sigsworth
Margaret Sigsworth
Jean Brown
Pat Hamker
Sara Webb
Marilyn & Jake Elias
Flora Smith
Eleanor Gall
Wave & Charlie Meeks
Norma Fortune
Lynne Dreger
Olive Stranahan
Gloria Fink
Jean & Joe Williams
Alberta Marvin
Doris & Phil Trout
Shirley Plum
Dale Austin
Cheryl Huene
Jeane Bungard
Pat Underwood
Gayle Persic
Don Robertson
Delores Henderson
Florence Nash
Lloyd Twedt
Helen Axford

The 140th anniversary of the church was celebrated on October 24, 1965, with two services featuring Bishop Francis E. Kearns as speaker. At a special fellowship and recognition meal that evening in the church basement, Mrs. Alta Meyers was honored for her 22 years as lay representative to the Annual Conference. Also recognized was

Velma Bainbridge, for 21 years as church organist; and Lorna Sweet, for her 21 years as choir director. (Mrs. Bainbridge served as organist until 1977; Mrs. Sweet resigned her position in 1972.) Both women had held many jobs in the church, from Sunday School teacher to communion steward.

On June 4, 1967, ground was broken for the first unit of the proposed building, across Lorain Road from Fields Cemetery. Visnapuu and Gaede, Inc., Cleveland architects, designed the church structure. Work continued through the winter, despite hard freezes and heavy snowfall. Construction of this unit was completed by June, 1968. Total cost amounted to $210,000. Consecration services for the new church were held on Sunday, June 9, 1968, following a congregational procession down Lorain Road led by Rev. Dwight Hayes -- from the old building (used from 1882 to 1968) to the new one.

The consecration sermon was given by Dr. Howard J. Wiant, District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church (Norwalk District). The building committee at this time consisted of: Rev. Dwight Hayes, William Reinhart, chairman, Mrs. Harold (Joan) Chalmers, Mrs. George (Thelma) Judy, Arthur Kistemaker, Carleton Purdey, Roy Collins, James Hurst, Theodore Peak, Harold Sweet, and Mrs. Robert (Devona) Grundy, Building Fund treasurer. Until completion of the second unit of the church in 1979, Sunday services were held in the Fellowship Hall, with the congregation seated on metal folding chairs. The former church building at Lorain and Root Roads was sold to Faith Baptist Temple, who used it as their house of worship for several years.

Fields Methodist Church had utilized several classrooms in the Fields Elementary School on Root Road during the mid-1960s. They provided additional Sunday School rooms (along with Wesley House) for the ever-increasing enrollment. This school, in 1975, was renamed Fields-Sweet Elementary School, in honor of one of our church leaders, the late Harold Sweet. An oil portrait of Mr. Sweet, a popular greeter and church worker for many years, is now displayed in our narthex.

The years since the new building's construction have seen continuing growth for Fields Church. On April 23, 1968, the Methodist Church was joined with the 22-year-old Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB). In 1970, our part of the 58-year-old North-East Ohio Conference became a portion of the newly-formed East Ohio Conference. During the Rev. David L. Heeter's pastorate, on June 4, 1972, we celebrated a "Day to Remember," being the fifth anniversary of the ground-breaking and the fourth anniversary of the new building's opening.

That same year, 1972, saw the birth of a new tradition at Fields -- the pictorial church directory. Since that time, there have been three more directories printed, in 1975, 1978, and 1982. Following Rev. Heeter's pastorate, for several months in 1974, our church was served by a supply minister, the Rev. Coburn Vandersall.

Soon after the Rev. James G. Skinner was assigned to the Fields pulpit in 1974, two more milestones were reached -- the membership of the church first exceeded 400; and the new parsonage on Pitts Blvd. was purchased. The parsonage was completely paid for by the fall of 1975. At the same time, Fields Church pioneered in the formation of a Community Care Committee for North Ridgeville, which has since instituted the following services: the Opportunity Shop clothing store (Sept., 1975), a Christmas store (Dec., 1975), and mini-bus service (March, 1978).

During 1975, we also marked the 150th anniversary, or Sesquicentennial, of Fields Church. To commemorate the event, members of the Evangelism Committee compiled the first detailed church history ever printed. (This booklet was revised in 1979 for the consecration of the new addition to the church; and again in 1985 for the 160th anniversary celebration.)

The Charge Conference authorized a new building fund in November, 1975, to pay for construction of the planned second unit of the new church. Architect Robert Gaede, who had helped to design the original building, was chosen to draw up plans for the new additions. On June 8, 1976, the Charge Conference also authorized the enlargement and paving of the parking lot, which was completed in June, 1977.

The building committee for the new addition was established in May, 1977, and consisted of: Rev. Skinner, Arnie Swan, chairman, Johanna Lepley, Bill and Joyce Reinhart, Wesley Dreger, Janine Hendricks, Jack McDonald, and Carleton Purdey. At a special congregational meeting on March 5, 1978, members voted 147 to 6 in favor of the building committee's recommendations. The Building Fund Campaign in March, 1978, raised $150,000 in pledges over the next three years.

Sunday, October 29, 1978, was the date of the groundbreaking service for our new sanctuary and educational wing. The congregation lined up all around the chalk outline of the building site, for the Litany of Dedication; then, as a symbolic gesture, each person turned over a spadeful of dirt. Work on the new additions progressed rapidly; and thanks to immeasurable help from the church members, much time and money was saved.

The new educational wing, with five additional classrooms, was consecrated on September 9, 1979. The first service in the new sanctuary was set for September 30, 1979, and featured a processional from the old room to the new. Memorial gifts in the sanctuary included the beautiful stained glass windows, carpeting, chancel furniture, and pews. October, 1979, was proclaimed the month of celebration, and the new narthex, offices, and sanctuary were consecrated at a service held Sunday, October 28, 1979 -- just one day short of the first anniversary of groundbreaking. Bishop James Thomas was the featured speaker.

Programming at Fields United Methodist Church has been greatly expanded within recent years. Family camp, golf outings, full-year confirmation classes, and the ecumenical vacation church school (with St. Peter's and the Congregational U.C.C.) were all introduced in the summer of 1976. The Sunshiners group, Junior High Youth Fellowship, and the annual bazaar were started in the fall of 1977. In January, 1977, a part-time children's education worker (Linda Novak) was hired, bringing the total church staff to six. A new Rodgers electric organ was purchased in September, 1978, and dedicated on the 24th of that month.

The year 1978 also saw the first annual children's Halloween party; and in December, the Sunshiners crocheted 144 white chrismons, representing the traditional symbols of Christianity -- and purchased a tree to hang them on. In May of 1979 the church softball team was started (and it has been captained by Bob Sigsworth for most of seven seasons, now); in the fall of '79 the Pony Express stewardship campaign was first used -- it was replaced by a Circuit Rider campaign in 1984 (for the Methodism Bicentennial), and by home visits and a video-taped presentation in 1985.

In 1980, Sharon Spieth was hired as a part-time Christian Education Director (in September), replacing Ruth Hamilton and Liz Simmons. Sharon's position became full-time in September, 1983. Under the leadership of Judy Sainsbury, Sharon Spieth, and Karen Sigsworth, the Church Library/Resource Center was reorganized and opened in 1981 -- there had been at least two earlier attempts at operating a library, the first about 1930-50, and another in about the early 1970s. The first annual children's Palm Sunday Fair was held in fellowship hall on April 12, 1981.

Also in 1981, our church (through the Norwalk District) supplied its first short-term Caribbean missionary, Dave Truman, to Jamaica. We also formed a Missions Committee for the first time in many years. Video-tape equipment was donated to the church by Bob and Janine Hendricks in January, 1982. Through Bob's dedication, our Sunday services have been filmed and broadcast over the North Ridgeville cable TV station each Wednesday evening for several years. In April of 1982, our Charge Conference recommended to the District the first two ministerial candidates from Fields Church -- Garry Hogue and Lynda Swan.

Our second short-term missionary, Carol Shaffer, went to Haiti in October, 1982. Our congregation contributed $800 in one day to help pay Carol's expenses. A picnic pavillion and small tool barn were constructed behind the church parking lot in about 1981. In 1983, our lawn tractor was stolen from the barn, and soon replaced. That same year, we began supporting Dennis and Dee Dee Heffner, missionaries at McCurdy School in Espanola, New Mexico. In 1985 a group of Fields Church members visited the school, to give some short-term assistance.

In 1983, after our return to a two-service format, the paid position of Music Director was created, with Ruth Joyce hired to replace Peggy Dunkel. Harold Millard became our third short-term missionary, when he went to Haiti in 1984 (he returned in 1985 with Bob Fortune). A Roof Fund campaign was started in February, 1984, to replace the 16-year-old roof. By the next year, $26,000 had been raised, and the roof replaced.

The Tuesday morning women's study group began our outreach program to the Brookside Hunger Center in Cleveland in 1984; this project was eventually taken over by the Social Concerns Committee. Dan Long, a student at Oberlin College, was hired as organist in 1984 (replacing Doris Trout); that was also the year of the Bicentennial of American Methodism, with its theme -- "Celebrating Grace and Freedom." On John Wesley's birthday in June, many of our members joined in a processional walk down Lorain Road to the old church, where we were permitted to hold a special 1784-style service and relive old memories.

Several of our members participated in a Bicentennial Convocation in October, 1984, at Cory United Methodist Church in Cleveland. The Bicentennial of Methodism culminated with our Christmas Eve service, with a six-foot stained glass panel from the old church (with the words, "Fields M. E. Church") displayed in our narthex. This gift from Faith Baptist Temple had been restored and framed by Walt Edwards.

In 1985, Dave and Jean Welty gave our church a microcomputer system for office record keeping, producing lists and form letters, etc. A Men's Group, Young Adult Couples Group, and Parents Education Group were formed during the year. Many other events and groups continued in 1985, such as the annual craft workshop, bowling league, and many Christmas fellowship opportunities. The church membership, which first exceeded 600 in 1982, is now near 700; and the proposed budget for 1986 is nearly $200,000.

During a six-week period in July and August of 1985, Dr. Skinner and his family, as well as the Fields congregation, were privileged to participate in the "Irish Exchange." The Skinners visited the United Methodist parish at Knock, Ireland (near Belfast); and the Rev. Billy McAllister family, of Knock, visited with us. We experienced first-hand each other's culture; and learned that, although we share the same basic faith and language, there are subtle differences (some fascinating, others more sobering) between the lifestyles of the people of Northern Ireland and the U.S.

This exchange was a unique opportunity to expand our knowledge of world Methodism. And many members of our congregation made lasting personal friendships with the McAllisters -- as did the Skinner family, with their hosts on the "Emerald Isle."

The 160th anniversary of Fields Church was celebrated in the fall of 1985; with Sunday, November 17th, being the primary day of celebration. Several former ministers were to be in attendance, a historical slide show and children's history play were scheduled, and the 20- to 50-year members (83 in all) would be recognized.

All of these and many other achievements of the past 160 years can be attributed to the sustained energy and involvement of many people who have made countless sacrifices to assure this growth. With this spirit of selflessness and faith, we at Fields United Methodist Church can look forward to continued expansion in the service of God and community in the years to come.

J. Sigsworth

MINISTERS OF FIELDS CHURCH
WITH CHRONOLOGY (1825 to 1985)

(1825) "Blaine's church class" organized in Wilson Blaine's log cabin at Bagley Road and Butternut Ridge (Lorain Road)

1826-27 Henry Olcott Sheldon and Ansel Brainard (Rev. Sheldon was probably the first Methodist Episcopal circuit rider to visit Blaine's cabin, in the area later known as Fields Corners)
1827-28 Shadrach Ruark
1828-29 Shadrach Ruark and John C. Havens
1829-30 Cyrus S. Carpenter and H. Colclazer

(1830) Otis Briggs settled in Ridgeville; the area near his home at Root Road and Butternut Ridge became known as Briggs' Corners

1830-31 Cyrus S. Carpenter and (Dr.) Elnathan Corrington Gavitt
1831-32 William Runnels and George Elliot
1832-33 William Runnels and John Kinnear
1833-34 Alvin Billings and James Brewster
1834-35 Alvin Billings and John Wilkinson
1835-36 James Wheeler and Thomas Barkdull

(1835?) "Blaine's" congregation began meeting at the Briggs' Corners schoolhouse, a one-room log structure

(1836) The Briggs' Corners M. E. Church was reassigned from the old Ohio Conference to the newly-formed Michigan Conference

1836-37 Samuel M. Allen and Jonathan Hudson
1837-38 Daniel Conant (dates from 1837 to 1865 are approximate)
1838-39 William Harris
1839-40 M. L. Starr

(1840) The North Ohio Conference formed; included our congregation

1840-41 Leonard Parker
1841-42 William C. Pierce (returned to our church in 1865)
1842-44 John L. Tibbals
1844-45 Hugh L. Parrish
1845-46 T. J. Pope
1846-47 Peter Sharp
1847-48 Zara C. Norton
1848-49 L. M. Pounds
1849-50 Orrin Mitchell

(1850) Briggs' Corners M. E. Church began meeting in its first building on the southwest corner of Root and Butternut Ridge

1850-51 Joseph Wykes
1851-52 N. Worden
1852-53 William Hitchcock
1853-54 John R. Jewett
1854-55 C. L. Foote
1855-56 D. D. T. Mattison
1856-57 Jacob A. Brown
1857-58 Samuel M. Beatty
1858-59 L. F. Ward
1859-60 William C. Huestiss
1860-61 J. W. Redding
1861-62 John Sites
1862-63 Tracy L. Waite
1863-64 George W. Dunn
1864-65 Omar Lawrence (returned to our church in 1895)
1865-68 William C. Pierce
1868-72 James Evans
1872-73 Orlando Pearce
1873-75 O. Milton Ashbaugh
1875-77 Elijah H. Dissette
1877-78 John McKean
1878-79 Newell J. Close
1879-82 Bennias Hushour

(1881) Gilbert Fields opened a post office in his store next to the church; the Briggs' Corners area soon became Fields Corners

(1882) The 32-year-old church was destroyed by fire; a former Avon church was moved and rebuilt on the Fields M. E. Church site

1882-85 Isaac W. Dwier
1885-88 W. B. Farrah
1888-91 Daniel Kneale
1891-93 E. H. Bush
1893-94 (Dr.) Glezen Asbury Reeder, Jr. (Rev. Reeder in 1906 helped the Conference to acquire the "Elyria Old Ladies Home" -- later called the Elyria Methodist Home; the Home's Reeder Hall was named for him)
1894-95 Frank Williams
1895-96 Omar Lawrence
1896-99 Henry A. Shook

1899-1901	G. W. Houk
1901-03	Edwin R. Romig
1903-05	W. L. Ewing
1905-06	L. M. Snyder
1906-08	James P. Mills and Charles McClure
(1907)	Fields M. E. Church became an independent "station" with Rev. Mills as its first "permanent" pastor
1908-10	Raymond H. Geist
1910-11	Ernest C. Reineke
1911-13	Clare T. Goodwin
(1912)	The North-East Ohio Conference formed, including our church; the first Fields parsonage was built on Butternut Ridge
1913-15	Arthur H. Perry
1915-17	Joseph W. Cleland
(1916)	Church remodeled; steeple removed, bell tower, basement added
1917-20	(Dr.) G. R. Mente
1920-22	Leroy E. Wright
1922-24	B. H. Ryan
1924-25	William M. Kinsley and Harold White
1925-27	Merrill A. Chaffee
1927-31	Hubert E. Cobb
1931-32	William J. Hodder
1932-35	John G. Koontz
1935-38	David S. Carpenter
1938-41	Lawrence A. Crawford
(1939)	Fields M. E. Church became Fields Methodist Church
1941-49	Eugene E. Thompson
1950-54	Ralph E. Dessem
1954-56	Ralph L. Reid
1956-61	John F. Link
(1957-63)	Planning was started, land was located, and double the required amount of funds was raised for the future construction of a larger building

1961-64 Richard L. Clark
1964-68 Dwight Hayes

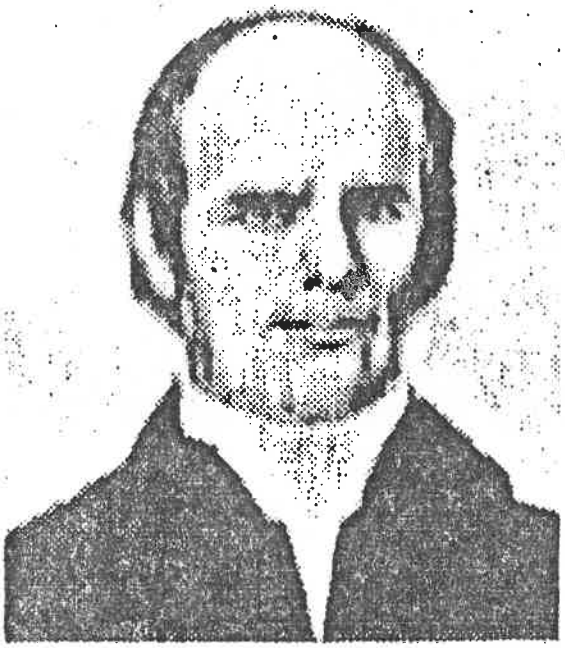
(1968) Fields Methodist became Fields United Methodist Church; our new building was consecrated

(1970) Our District became part of the newly-formed East Ohio Conference

1968-74 David L. Heeter
1974- (Dr.) James G. Skinner

(1974) The new Pitts Blvd. parsonage was purchased

(1979) Consecration services were held for the new addition (church offices, sanctuary, and educational wing); church membership first reached 500



H. O. Sheldon who named the village of Berea in 1836.

50-YEAR MEMBERS OF FIELDS CHURCH
(AS OF 12/31/85)

Clarabell (Rowe) Miles	August 30, 1914
Doris (Cheesman) Henson	November 18, 1924
Hester Taylor	April 17, 1926
Hazel Reed	July 17, 1927
Lorna (Smith) Sweet	July 26, 1931
Nelson Nash	April 16, 1933

40-YEAR MEMBERS

Alice (Smith) Vanek	March 21, 1940
Delbert R. Worcester	April 10, 1941
Helen Axford	April 5, 1942
Leslie Dreger	April 5, 1942
Dorothy (Buck) Nash	April 25, 1943
Russell L. Sigsworth	April 25, 1943
Joyce (Henson) Reinhart	March 25, 1945

30-YEAR MEMBERS

Leonard Miles	April 14, 1946
Margaret (Ritsko) Sigsworth	April 14, 1946
Thomas A. Sigsworth	May 30, 1947
Robert L. Fortune	March 21, 1948
Norma (Sweet) Fortune	March 21, 1948
Jean (Gaydash) Williams	March 21, 1948
Alfred T. Underwood	April 10, 1949
Eleanor "Pat" Underwood	April 10, 1949
Pearl (Myers) Mohler	December 25, 1949
Jane (Palmer) Bender	April 9, 1950
Marjorie Lanning	June 18, 1950
Agnes (Smith) Mitchell	June 18, 1950
Marilyn L. Elias	December 24, 1950
Esther (Dair) Worcester	December 24, 1950
Leona (Austin) Loepp	December 30, 1950
Mary Rofe	October 28, 1951
Berton S. Bridge	April 10, 1952
Marjorie (Gaede) Sigsworth	December 21, 1952
Charles D. Woodward	December 21, 1952
Wilma Woodward	December 21, 1952

30-YEAR MEMBERS (Cont.)

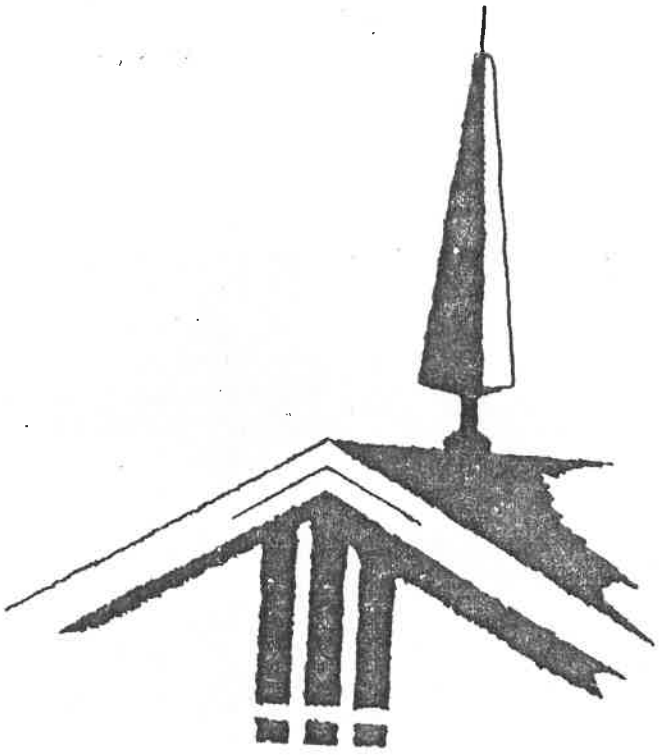
Amil J. Smith	April 2, 1953
Flora (Harper) Smith	April 2, 1953
Robert Luchsinger	June 21, 1953
Josephine Luchsinger	June 21, 1953
Georgia (Zwiezinski) Austin	February 14, 1954
Clerdon Ray Hornbeck	February 14, 1954
Faye R. Hornbeck	February 14, 1954
Shirley (Pallas) Worcester	February 14, 1954
William H. Reinhart	April 15, 1954
Leona Collins	October 30, 1955
Dale Austin	December 23, 1955

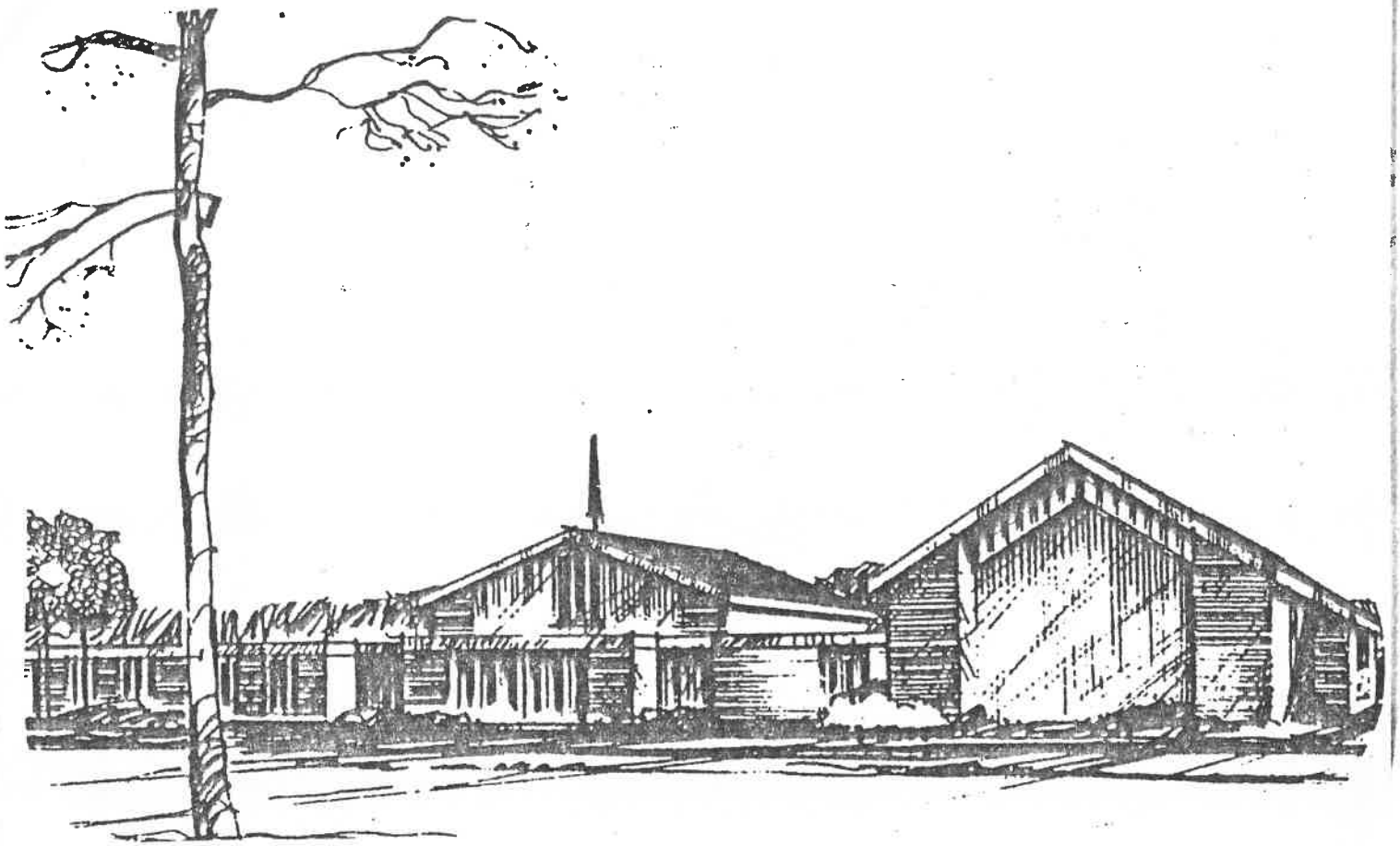
25-YEAR MEMBERS

Cheryl (Elias) Huene	March 25, 1956
Melinda (Benner) Foor	May 8, 1956
Harris Hamker	March 3, 1957
Joseph N. Williams	March 3, 1957
Lillian Williams	March 3, 1957
Iva Coleman	April 14, 1957
Robert A. Grundy	April 14, 1957
Devona (Myers) Grundy	April 14, 1957
Joyce White	August 11, 1957
Marie Judy	November 24, 1957
Ralph K. Nash	March 30, 1958
Marjorie Dreger	March 22, 1959
Patricia Hamker	March 22, 1959
Frank J. Smith	March 22, 1959
Henry Coleman	June 21, 1959
Eleanor (Gall) Hertzog	June 21, 1959
Raymond Wolfe	June 21, 1959
Laverne Wolfe	June 21, 1959
William Wolfe	June 21, 1959
Jean S. Kocsis	April 10, 1960
Kathleen Spence	April 10, 1960
Charles Meeks	June 19, 1960
Wavelene Meeks	June 19, 1960
Richard W. Fuller	October 16, 1960
Jane Fuller	October 16, 1960

20-YEAR MEMBERS

Janet Miles	December 17, 1961
Josephine Fulkerson	February 3, 1962
Ruth K. Adams	April 15, 1962
Violet Smith	November 3, 1963
Emmett Whisenhunt, Jr.	November 3, 1963
Mayola Whisenhunt	November 3, 1963
Carleton Purdey	March 22, 1964
Linda Purdey	March 22, 1964
Janet L. Amonett	May 23, 1965
Alvin Fulkerson	May 23, 1965
Dawn (Grundy) Middleton	May 23, 1965
Charlotte Procaccini	May 23, 1965
Denise (Smith) Pack	May 23, 1965
Diane (Sigsworth) Myers	May 23, 1965





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