

## **DEDICATION**

**This history is dedicated to faithful church members who  
give and give and give again what God has given them.**

**Two particular persons exemplify all the faithful church  
members of Desert Chapel United Methodist Church.**

**Alvina Swindler**

**and**

**Fremont Alden (1911-2006)**

**And to these two special people this church history is  
gratefully dedicated.**

**Note: Fremont passed away quietly at the home of his daughter in California on December 2, 2006. His memorial service was held at Desert Chapel on December 19, 2006.**

**Desert Chapel United Methodist Church  
462 North Palo Verde Drive  
Apache Junction, Arizona**

**\*\*\* It began with a Sunday School in 1950.**

**\*\*\* Over the years, the church has expanded into a campus of six buildings with hundreds of faithful worshippers and servers through the years.**

**Introduction:**

**The beginnings of Apache Junction, the city and anecdotal stories of the church's beginning as told by the daughters of the founder of Desert Chapel—Peggy Lou Wirt and Dora Smigel to Church Historian, Lyla Siebrecht.**

**Part I – A one page condensed history of the manner in which Desert Chapel began by Marguerite Wirt, Church Founder.**

**Part II – A History of the years 1953 – 1968 by Agnes Bennett. This covers the building of the original Desert Chapel, the Dining room and restrooms, the Breezeway between the buildings, Woeller Hall and the Education Building. The pastors during this time were Rev. Fred Ferguson and Rev. Howard Brown.  
Edited by Lyla Siebrecht, Historian**

**Part III – A History of the years 1968 -- 2006 by Lyla Siebrecht  
Desert Chapel Historian**

**Part IV – Conclusion by Pastor Galene Boyett**

**Edited by Elaine Slate Member of the Committee on History and Archives  
of Desert Chapel**

**Appendix -- List of Charter Members joining the church September 21, 1957**  
**Roll of Honor of Church Staff through the years**  
**Roll of Annual Conference Supportive Staff over the years**

**INTRODUCTION**

Immediately after the end of World War II in 1945-1946, the area surrounding Apache Junction was opened for homesteading. Five-acre lots were given each participant with the requirement that some structure be built on the land. Veterans from the area military bases who wanted to remain in Arizona were eager to accept the government land. And the state of Arizona wanted people to stay and become good citizens of the state.

In 1947 Jim Edwards came with his family from upper New York State to live here. They found many five-acre lots with a fireplace or a small shanty in one corner. Jim was a high school student and graduated from the high school in Tempe. Jim is still an active member of the congregation in 2007.

By 1950, there were probably fifteen families living in the area. There still were no schools or churches here but there was a bus to take school children to Florence for classes. When the original Desert Chapel was built in 1954, there were 75 families in the area.

There were no streets – University Drive was just a trail between Ocotillo and Ironwood. Apache Trail was a busy paved highway.

The first Christmas program was held in the tent. Betty and Evelyn Wirt sang a duet; Dora and Leo F. Wirt were in charge of lighting. Marguerite Wirt directed the children's program. There was a contingent of people from Mesa who had come to the program to support the little group's effort. They were amazed at how good the program was.

Sunday mornings began with the worship service first, followed by Sunday school. Classes met everywhere—some in the church without a roof and the smallest children taught by Dora Wirt met in a most unusual place. They would park two cars in a V shape and the children would sit in the back seat of each car and the teacher would stand in the V to teach them.

One of the most memorable days was the day when the roof went on. Everyone was eager to get it completed for the wedding reception to be held in the evening. Teenagers formed a line and the shingles would be relayed between them and right up the ladder to

the men who were nailing them on. They remember that even the groom was helping with the shingles to get the roof completed.

Everyone worked wherever needed to make the little church a reality and they enjoyed themselves in the doing of their tasks.

## **HOW THE CHURCH BEGAN**

By Marguerite Wirt

The Desert Chapel United Methodist Church had its beginnings as a Protestant Community Church in Apache Junction, founded in 1952 under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Wirt, Mrs. Wirt's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Archie Cornell, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Hugg and many others.

However, before 1952 the Wirts and the Huggs had decided to have a Sunday school every Sunday. Mr. L. Dean Steffy had a shed on the trail, only an old aluminum garage that was not used on Sundays. In November of 1950 the Wirts and the Huggs got permission to use this shed for a Sunday school. This was the very first beginning of the "Desert Chapel Community Church."

This first Sunday school moved around a lot. Mrs. White let them meet in a tent on her property that was a few rods south on Vineyard Road (now Ironwood Road). The Sunday school moved from the tent into several small buildings on the trail; one was a shed made entirely of cactus wood. The first "Ladies Ad" met under a Palo Verde tree east on University Road.

Sometime in 1951 the people began to talk about a building of their own for their Church. Mr. Wirt and Mr. Cornell each gave \$5.00 toward a new Church building and by nightfall they had collected \$50.00 for the building.

Joe Adams, a cement contractor and good friend, had several pieces of land north of the trail, away from the noise of a busy highway. These he was selling for \$360.00 a lot. He offered to give us one piece, our choice, for a new church building. The people would not accept this offer as a gift. They would buy, but Mr. Adams insisted; so they compromised and agreed to pay half price \$180. per lot or acre.

Now they needed more money. They had pancake suppers and devised various schemes to raise money. They had chicken and noodles dinners and one lady raised chickens. She furnished 62 eggs for noodles. Mrs. Cornell was to make the noodles. The group also

had bake sales and held auctions. The Cornells had a new house on Valley Road, unoccupied, so suppers and auctions were held there for a while. At one pancake and sausage sale they auctioned off bazaar type items. Running out of items to sell, they picked up the tablecloth belonging to Emma Hugg and sold it, which amused her no end. They also used an old barracks building, moved in from Williams Air Field and placed it at Ironwood and the Trail. The Cornells owned this. Mr. Cornell visited every lumber and cement place asking for donations.

On April 17, 1954 Betty Ann Wirt and Frank R. Muscato held their reception in our new building. The first wedding was of Mirna Detert and Mr. Morrish. One of the Sunday school girls was planning to be married in the church. The church building committee started to construct the kitchen, dining room and two bathrooms. Later they decided the church was too small and planned Woeller hall addition on the dining room. The Sunday school had built up to 85 children and the south wing was built.

Note: In 2002 at the suggestion of Pastor Galene Boyett, Marguerite wrote a little booklet describing the building and growth of Desert Chapel United Methodist Church. It was titled "An Answered Prayer" and has a picture of the original chapel on the cover of the book.

### **THE YEARS 1953-1968 by Agnes Bennett**

On April 1, 1953, with money on hand, building of the church began. Leo Wirt and Norman Teason laid out the foundation for the church. On May 2, Cornell with the help of Elmer Hugg, Jim Blanding, Norman Teason and many more, the first concrete floor was poured.

Neighbors and friends of this area were concerned about the young people having nothing to do so everyone pitched in, gave money and their labor to see that the church was finished. Sunday school and Church services were held without the walls. Rev. Showalters, a young man from Mesa was the first Pastor. He came out from Mesa, off and on. He received no pay for his services. He was a big help in starting the church.

The men finished the walls. All had not been easy. When two rows of blocks had been laid, and everyone had gone home for the night, a member of the church who was not in complete agreement with all the arrangements took her son and pushed down all the blocks. Her reason was that they had bought the land from a Mormon, and she was afraid Desert Chapel might become a Mormon Church. By December 24, 1953, the men had finished the church, and the first Christmas program was held that night in a completed church.

Mr. Cornell purchased the pulpit chair at an auction in Phoenix. On May 1, 1954, just a year from the start of construction all the debts of Desert Chapel were paid. Then on May 12, 1954, Mr. Cornell passed away having realized one of his many dreams.

The first seats for the congregation were old theater seats that Shirley Weeks found and had hauled to the old barracks building where the seats were stripped, new plywood backs put on and varnish applied and proudly they were moved into the new Church.

The second minister of the church was Rev. Keith Leafdale who was paid \$10.00 a week. The large pulpit Bible was bought at this time by the youth of the church. They gathered cotton bolls and chinaberries, painted them red and gold and made corsages that they sold to the women of the church. The names of the twenty-six youth in the group are in the front of the Bible.

Keith Leafdale was studying to become a pastor and it was he who suggested that the Desert Chapel congregation would find advantages in being attached to a denomination and he suggested Methodist. Emma Hugg volunteered that she knew Rev. Hedgpeth, the District Superintendent well and would talk to him.

On February 10, 1957, Rev. Hedgpeth and Rev. Eaton of First Church Mesa came to look the situation over. It was a rainy day so only nine members of the congregation showed up and Rev. Hedgpeth said, "We will be happy to have you join us.

On March 2, 1957, the Official Board of the Desert Chapel Community Protestant Church met with fifteen people present and voted to dissolve that church and to turn the church over to the Methodist Conference.

On May 13, 1957, Rev. Herschel Hedgpeth met again with the congregation and at that time appointed Rev. Fred Ferguson to be the pastor. He remained for five years.

### **Ministry of Rev. Fred Ferguson 1957 - 1962**

Rev. Fred Ferguson was a lay pastor and an employee of the plumbing department of the Sears store in Mesa. He told us he did not believe in foreign missions but wanted to give his money, time and talents to some needy local community and the Desert Chapel Community certainly needed him.

On September 21, 1957 Rev. Hedgpeth returned for a formal organizational morning worship service and at that time 43 persons signed the role as charter members of the church.

Rev. Ferguson had spent the summer making calls on prospective new members of the church living in the community and the church membership that was 22 in May became 43 in September. Some of the original members did not care for that addition either. The church was incorporated as a Methodist Church on January 18, 1958.

Just two months later on November 22, 1957, a Building and Planning Board was formed with George Sheffer as Chairman and Louis Kriz as Secretary. Mr. Kriz was to draw up plans to include: a new building size 30 x 55 feet, centered behind and at right angle with the present Chapel, buildings to be separated by 20 feet, new building to include dining room, kitchen, two toilets and a storage room or closets.

Sunday, January 19, 1958 was ground breaking day with District Superintendent Hedgepeth again present to turn the first spadeful of dirt. Rev. Fred Ferguson had the honor of the second spadeful of dirt.

The new building was completed on April 10, 1958 with a \$3,000 FHA loan to cover the building material costs and the completion of the roof over the breezeway between the two buildings and the 10,000 cubic foot evaporative cooler and duct work needed to cool the buildings during the hot Arizona summers.

Mr. Kriz was a gifted builder and so at this time, several people gave the cost of the materials he needed to make the worship furniture. The Christ bearers and the young people's class gave the sixteen-foot long Communion rail with kneeling pads. The altar was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Stevenson and the matching lectern was given by Mr. Robert Pounder.

The velveteen drapes for behind the altar were the gift of the Friendship Class and the Adult Bible Class. The brass cross and matching candle sticks were the gift of Zora and Carol Stevenson; the brass Baptismal bowl was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. C. Paul Kidder. The Methodist Youth Fellowship gave the candles and the flame guards. All were dedicated on a Sunday morning in 1958. Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Gray gave the light fixtures for the new dining room.

Now that Desert Chapel had a dining room and a kitchen—there were many interesting events held. The first one was a Pancake supper on the new Breezeway in August sponsored by the Bible Class with the M.Y. F. as his or her guests—everyone had a good time. The W.S.C.S. had an Ice Cream Social and a Bazaar.

Now, far seeing people in the Desert Chapel congregation became aware that when adjoining property to the church became available for purchase, it would be wise to buy it.. Five acres were purchased by a coalition of ten church families to ensure that land would be there when needed. In addition the church purchased another one hundred fifty feet frontage to the south of the original chapel.

This would give the Methodist Church an assurance of ample room for expansion for the coming years in this fast growing community.

The newly completed fellowship hall was used not only by the Sunday school classes on Sunday morning but also by Boy Scout Troop #184 In addition, every Friday night the

fellowship hall was open for recreation by the youth of the whole community. The MYF held their regular monthly meetings there.

There were two work teams from the Methodist church of Whittier, California who came to help with painting and finishing work on the kitchen and fellowship hall during 1959.

The WSCS had an interesting experience in the summer of 1959. Now that the kitchen was complete, dishes were needed for serving those meals they were having.

Mr. Kurt Williams, General Manager of the Blakely Oil Company met with the Executive Board of the WSCS with a proposal. He would supply the church with place settings for 100 people and the dishes would be paid for by coupons deposited by church members as they purchased gas at the Apache Junction Gas Station—one coupon per dish for each 10 gallons of gas purchased.

Mr. Kriz made a replica of the church with a slot to put the coupons in and because the women needed the dishes, Mr. Williams promised to deliver the dishes immediately. He knew the people would pay for them with the coupons. This was a forerunner to the Green Stamps and Gold Bond Stamps of a later era.

Instead of taking the dishes to the Apache Junction Station; Blakely's made quite a ceremony of the event and flew the dishes in on their helicopter, landing in the churchyard during the WSCS monthly meeting. They left the dishes and took all the ladies who wished for a brief helicopter ride over the Junction. Nearly all the ladies took the ride and were thrilled.

All did not go too well with the ladies and their dishes for on August 10, 1959; Blakely notified them that someone had been looting the church coupon boxes at the stations at Apache Junction and Mesa. Blakely suggested an immediate accounting of all coupons that had been turned in and also a report of those known to be missing.

Blakely contacted the managers who agreed to personally remove the coupons from the boxes daily and lock them in the station safe. No more trouble after that.

The highlight of each year for the WSCS was a February Luncheon at the King's Ranch. They sold 300 tickets every year at \$2.50. The event always netted over \$100.00. For several years Mrs. Fabry of King's Ranch, though not a member of the WSCS opened her home for their annual Spring Luncheon.

Her home at that time was very beautiful, the show place of Apache Junction. People from all of the nearby towns would attend these luncheons just to see her home. This always turned out to be the biggest money making endeavor of each year.

In October 1959, two Sunday morning worship services were begun. There were over one hundred in these services. In November attendance reached 175, and by December



and January it hovered in the 190's. On February 21<sup>st</sup>, the high peak for the year was 224 in the two services.

On Easter Sunday in 1960 there was a total of 408 persons in the various services of the day. Those services were two worship services, Sunday school and the evening Family Night program of supper and picture show—the last of the “Living Christ” series.

These larger attendance figures caused a concern that the church was not able to reach as many as it might be possible to serve if the church had room to seat those who wished to worship at Desert Chapel with us. There was some planning to start a larger and more adequate sanctuary for worship. It would allow everyone to worship together rather than in two separate groups.

During the summer of 1959 under the leadership of Mrs. Mildred Marks and Mrs. Marguerite Wirt a two weeks Daily Vacation Bible School was held. Summer also saw nine of the young people attending one of the various camps. The MYF Council held a planning retreat in the early fall and plans for the year were made, including the organization of a teen canteen.

At this time, it was also decided that the church should purchase the Everett and Grace Smith property that lay adjacent to lots 15 and 16 that the church already owned in Block 1 of the Newton Subdivision. There were two small frame buildings on the lots purchased for a total amount of \$5, 500 at the rate of 3% interest per year.

Desert Chapel property had grown to 350-foot frontage by 270 feet in depth. Now planning began in earnest for an enlarged worship area. This would automatically give Desert Chapel five classrooms for Sunday school in the original chapel building.

The design of the new Sanctuary would extend the Fellowship Hall eighty feet and it would conform to the present width of thirty feet. It was felt that this addition could be built and finished for approximately \$15,000. This plan would fit into the proposed long-range plan, giving room for approximately 250 at a worship service.

A year was spent in studying the plan for an expanded worship area with Mr. H. Dale Tumbleson of Phoenix.

On April 12, 1961, the low bid of \$2,810.00 was accepted from Oscar Davis for the foundation, stem, concrete floors, block walls, windows, steel lintels, pilasters and fill. The Building Committee and the Trustees were given permission to proceed to build from this point forward within the \$15, 000.00 limitation.

The kitchen was enlarged and enclosed, and more and better equipment installed with the help of the Women's Society of Christian Service.

The original Chapel building was partitioned off for six classrooms. New curtains were purchased and hung in each room. The new sanctuary was fully equipped except for the

cooling unit. It was attractive and had a capacity of about 190 persons with additional space in the fellowship hall. The cost of the building, equipment and facilities was \$14,671.13.

On October 1, 1961, the first worship service was held in the lovely new sanctuary. There were now 157 on the membership roll. The Finance Committee reported that 93 giving units subscribed to the current expense budget. They were concerned that 61 members had not made a weekly commitment. An Every Member Canvas was held every year and regular financial statements were sent quarterly to all members.

With worship being held in the new sanctuary there was a need for worship aids. Through gifts, memorials and funds provided by the choir— choir robes, a storage cabinet for the robes, a light for the piano and choir music were all purchased in 1961

There were 39 new full members in 1959—Six from a preparatory membership class, two on profession of faith, 21 transfers from Methodist Churches and ten from other denominations. There were 133 members in all.

Rev. Ferguson's pastoral calls in 1959 consisted only of 39 home visits and 21 hospital calls. That was partly because of his broken leg that made mobility difficult. He was tired of driving into Mesa all the time so when he got a chance to sell his home, he sold it. The Mason Homes Subdivision, just north of University Drive, about the 900 block was just starting with the new homes very reasonably priced so he bought a new home there.

While Rev. Ferguson was fixing it up, he fell off the ladder and broke his leg. However, he kept on preaching with his leg in a cast.

In 1960, there were 46 on the Church youth rolls. Fifteen were active in the MYF evening groups. The MYF members collected for UNICEF and took part in a play let in the Maundy Thursday services with the work team from Long Beach First Church. Desert Chapel was well represented at all Sub District rallies and had three members at the District Convention.

The WSCS had eight program meetings with an average attendance of thirty. All members were very active. Three women attended the School of Missions at Redlands, 21 women attended the Western Jurisdiction Conference in Phoenix. Two attended the WSCS-WSG meeting in Mesa.

Special events for the women in 1960 included the following: A film and lecture on Communion by Dr. Moon of Mesa, World Day of Prayer, a Heritage Tea, a speaker on the United Nations, and their third annual Spring Luncheon at King's Ranch.

Missionary Education for that same year found the people listening to Rev. and Mrs. I.E. Gillet from the Belgian Congo, Rev. David Todd from the American Leprosy Mission

and Miss Elsie Farris of Long Beach, California. The church gave generously to advance these specials.

In February, Desert Chapel had a preaching mission for five nights with Rev. William Smith of Phoenix as guest speaker. The event created a deeper spiritual atmosphere in the church.

The Methodist Men's Club of Desert Chapel was organized in January of 1960. By March they had seven members and Vinton Peck was President.

The elected leaders of Desert Chapel in 1961 were: Les Olson, Chairman of the Administrative Board; Sam Boyd, Chairman of Elected Stewards, Ralph Reed was Secretary, Lay Leaders were Fred Jacobs and Eugene Wadleigh. And the delegates to Annual Conference were Lloyd Graham and Mrs. Ronald Beard.

The estimated value of Desert Chapel included: Church buildings \$30,000.00; value of land \$9,000.00, furnishings and equipment \$6,000 with a total worth of \$45,000.00.

In 1961, Hans Geerath, an Indonesian refugee, arrived in Apache Junction by way of Holland. The church had guaranteed his support for a three-year period if necessary. John and Grace Dayhoff owned and operated a motel on the highway just west of Crimson. They offered the use of one of their motel units for him to live in during the idle summer months, and the church agreed to pay for it if necessary later on. Hans joined the church on November 26, 1961.

He immediately got work at the Desert Flame that was near Dayhoff's Motel so he could walk to work. Eventually he obtained a job as electrician at the Superstition Inn, where he continued to work for many years. Hans was a well-educated man having learned his trade in Indonesia. A cousin of Hans' came later under Desert Chapel sponsorship. The cousin proved to be equally as capable, industrious and entirely self-supporting.

On July 1, 1962, Rev. Ferguson completed his five-year pastorate and Rev. Howard Brown was appointed the new pastor of Desert Chapel. Rev. Clinton C. McPheeters was now the District Superintendent.

### **Ministry of Rev. Howard Brown 1962 - 1968**

Lee Olson, President of the Commission on Finance, gave a financial plan for the purchase of a parsonage.

The Vern Eggers' property on North Bixby Drive was for sale for \$15,000.00. The church already had a pledge of \$1,800; so it would need to raise \$2,700.00 more to make a down payment of \$4,500, which was what Mr. Eggers asked. The congregation was asked to participate in buying notes at four percent.

They knew that the church could borrow \$3,500.00 by increasing its present loan at the Valley National Bank. Mr. Williams made the motion, seconded by Norman Teason to purchase the property. The motion was passed unanimously.

So the first parsonage for Desert Chapel was purchased in October, 1962 and occupied by Rev. Howard and Mary Brown and their three children—Kathy, Laura and Steve. An Open House was held in November and over two hundred people attended.

Rev. Brown was to have one day off each week and some help for typing and reproduction. Soon, Mary Brown was helping in the church office and her help was deeply appreciated.

And in 1963 it was decided that with a Sunday school enrollment of 85 students, it was time for Desert Chapel to build again. This time it was to be an Education wing. The new building was to be built at a right angle to Woeller Hall (the Sanctuary) extending east.

This new building would make a U complex with an open courtyard in the middle. Woeller and Sons had the contract for the new building.

It was completed in November of 1964 and in that same month, Woeller Hall became debt free after three years of mortgage payments.

A unique double service was held on January 24, 1965, led by Dr. Clinton McPheeters, District Superintendent. At this time the new Sanctuary was dedicated because it was debt free and the Education Unit was consecrated because it was ready to be used, though not debt.

In June 1965, Desert Chapel received second place in the annual “Church of the Year” award at the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference. This award was based on the Church’s ministry—outreach, stewardship, social concerns, missions, both at home and abroad, spiritual life, appearance of church property, including the parsonage and community involvement.

Also in 1965, Elmer Woeller and Sons refinished the roofs and walls of the other two buildings to match the Education Building.

And in 1966, Desert Chapel was again nominated as “Church of the Year” and again received Second Place. This was during Rev. Brown’s third year.

Under Rev. Brown’s leadership, the Maundy Thursday Holy Communion Service of a Seder meal was begun. The Easter Sunrise service, followed by a breakfast at Desert Chapel was held instead of the ecumenical one at Mountain View Cemetery. The people also liked going outside at Christmastime for a fellowship circle, at the close of the Christmas Service.

The horseback rides into Superstition Mountains were unforgettable. Rev. Brown got lost from the group, at one time, and spent three hours looking desperately for a place called Whiskey Springs where the group was to have lunch. The group ate his lunch.

Desert Chapel had three very good choirs in 1966. Lorraine Yurk led the Junior Choir of children. Charles Meyers led the Youth Choir. This choir gave a very outstanding Christmas concert—all a cappella on Dec. 10 in the church.

The Adult Choir directed by Ed Manuel gave their Christmas Cantata on Dec. 17 in the church and again gave their Cantata at the Southern Baptist Church and the Masonic Temple the following week. This choir had three accompanists—Fay Bowers, Vera Norton and Gladys Kidder.

Also in 1966, the congregation at Desert Chapel raised \$1,500.00 to send Rev. Brown as an exchange pastor to Korea for five weeks. He was selected along with six other ministers in the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference to go to Korea.

The group landed at Kimpo Airport in Seoul where Rev. Brown had landed his airplane in World War II, in flying the mail to our U.S. men in Korea. It was quite a thrill to return years later as a Methodist Minister.

In the fall of 1967, there was a program that enlisted volunteers to enhance the appearance of the exterior surroundings of the church property. This was a timely project to make the church grounds attractive prior to the months of much extended activity at the Church when winter visitors step up the tempo of Church participation.

The next year, Rev. Park Paek Yong was with Desert Chapel from December 1967 through January 1968. Rev. Park won every bodies' hearts. Rev. Brown and Rev. Park alternated in preaching from Sunday to Sunday. Rev. Park's sermons were printed so people could follow him easily.

A Craft Shop was set up and Rev. Park taught all how to make some beautiful Christmas lanterns to hang up in the windows. Rev. Park had a Health Lecture that he gave to all interested organizations in the area. There was a memorable farewell party for Rev. Park when each organization in the church gave a special performance in his honor.

And in 1968, at the conclusion of Rev. Brown's six year pastorate, Desert Chapel was again nominated for "Church of the Year" in the Conference and this time the Church received First Place.

Also on Sunday March 10, 1968, the Commission on Worship sponsored a Tenth Anniversary Celebration. It began with a pot luck supper, with a large cake that had ten candles on it. The evening's program had Charles Meyers as Master of Ceremonies. He introduced music from the Choirs, a historic review by Mrs. Stella Elson, a letter from the

former pastor, Rev. Fred Ferguson, recognition of Charter Members of Desert Chapel and a colored slide review of the history of the church.

On June 30, 1968, Rev. Brown gave his final sermon at Desert Chapel and was transferred to South Pasadena California.

### **Ministry of Charles Wharton 1968 – 1976**

The new pastor for Desert Chapel was Rev. Charles Wharton, a Seminary classmate Rev. Brown. He came from Wilcox, Arizona and his first Sunday in the pulpit was July 7, 1968, Mrs. Wharton's name was Opal.

An interesting photograph from this era, in our Church Archives is a picture of the surviving Charter Members—thirteen are pictured of the original forty-three.

New leadership came into the church with Rev. Verle Trueblood, Vinton and Barbara Peck and Elmer and Myrtle Woeller during Rev. Wharton's ministry. Manfred Toland was now Lay Leader.

In the Church Archives there is a picture of the front of Woeller Hall and fifteen men standing behind fifteen women. These were the Golden Anniversary Couples attending Desert Chapel during the year of 1968.

There is also another touching photograph of Roger Morris holding a very tiny baby and the caption underneath read "Roger Morris and friend  
Our oldest and our youngest."

The Luella Noll Memorial Cross is also pictured with the new buildings in the background. The cross was lit at night and served as a community landmark. Robert Noll of Ambassador Downs Mobile Homes in Mesa gave it as a tribute to his wife's memory.

In 1973, a new organ was purchased and Cathy Lewis became organist. It was in November 1972 that the first newsletter for Desert Chapel was mailed to church families. It seems that this only succeeded for a short time.

In March 1974 special evangelistic services were held at Desert Chapel with preaching by Jonny Carlson, who was with the Christian Ashram movement begun by E. Stanley Jones.

Two of those 1957 charter members were Everett and Grace Smith. They owned a small grocery store called "Smitty's"—it was located on the south end of the area surrounding the church property. The children of the church loved to purchase penny candy at the Store. After Mr. Smith's death, the property was sold to Desert Chapel. The cremains,

(ashes) of both Mr. and Mrs. Smith are buried in a flower bed at Desert Chapel.

The little store became known as Agape House and became a youth center for the church's young people. The Whartons gave Agape House a "coke machine". They also constructed a barbeque/altar at the end of Agape House as a memorial to Rev. Wharton's sister Edythe Mark who died in August. Rev. Melvin Lockard of the Wesleyan Church, Manfred Toland and Rev. Wharton did the labor.

### **Ministry of Rev. Hal Kingsley 1976 – 1982**

In June 1976, after a very rewarding ministry at Desert Chapel, Opal and Charles Wharton were transferred to Avondale and Rev. Hal and Barbara Kingsley from Avondale were transferred to Desert Chapel in July.

The Kingsleys were a beautiful family with two teen-age daughters who stepped right into leadership roles. The Church Archives have two pictures that show this family. There is one of Hal and Barbara and one of the parents with Allison and Carol in the center.

On January 29, 1978 John and Ruth Winslow became Associate members of Desert Chapel. John subsequently became the Youth Director for Desert Chapel. He was a very able Bible student and taught the Cactus Class. He went home to be with his Lord on February 11, 1979.

Major events in the Kingsley pastorate of 1976 to 1982 include:

Annual Great Day of Singing

Annual Watch Night Service

"Chrisman" Project for the Christmas tree by the Worship Committee and volunteers

Cantata entitled "Women of the Bible" performed on Mother's Day

Lay Witness Mission in 1980 with good attendance and support

Monthly Potluck Fellowship sponsored by various church groups

Vacation Bible School in 1981 had six classes—each with a good number of participants

There are pictures in the Archives of classes for Nursery, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, Junior High and Senior High. Mabel Livingston was the Director of the School. Rev. Kingsley is pictured as the teacher of the High School Class, Ila Bennett is shown serving refreshments and Bob Daniels is the Junior High teacher.

In 1977, the Friendship Bible Class was organized to include both men and women. There are Secretary's Minutes in our Church Archives that list membership, attendance, offerings, mission projects and their study topics over the years. This group is still active and meeting for study in 2007.

At Annual Conference in 1982, Hal and Barbara Kingsley were transferred to Whittier California and Rev. Ray Baines was assigned to Desert Chapel. His ministry was barely one year—he was soon assigned to Kerney, Arizona.

### **Ministry of Pastor Jon Ierly 1984 – 1991**

It was fortunate for Desert Chapel that Rev. Andy Michaelson came to live in the area in retirement and was available as the Intern Pastor until Pastor Jon and Robbie and sons Jimmy and Billy arrived on January 15, 1984.

Pastor Jon brought humor, zest, and spirituality to Desert Chapel and his wonderful family supported him.

Also in 1984, a good thing happened for Desert Chapel when Ladd and Leone Coburn asked permission to park their mobile home on church grounds. In return, Ladd acted, as church, custodian and Leone became Director of Christian Education and Director of Youth Work. She was very capable and had exciting programming and continued in that role until 1990. She continued as Director of Christian Education until 1992.

Another helper for the leadership of Desert Chapel happened during this time when Rev. Ken Harris moved another mobile home to the church grounds. He became Assistant Pastor to Pastor Jon and continued to help wherever needed, especially in hospital calling and in organizing Cluster Groups in Mobile Home Parks. He remained until the mid 1990's.

An event during Pastor Jon's ministry was the Memorial Dedication of Woeller Hall and the placement of the picture of Elmer and Woeller.

Another attempt was made at a Church Newsletter in 1984. The Ierlys had a Parsonage Open House with over two hundred people attending. A special Bi-Centennial Observance was held on April 29, 1984 when the Methodist Church was 200 years old. Another new leader Lu Beaulier was in charge of the event.

There are many pages of photographs of new members received during Pastor Jon's ministry—for instance on January 1, 1984, there were 193 members at Desert Chapel and on Dec. 31, 1984 membership was 222. A Church Directory was completed in February 1985.

In 1980, Peg and Rollie Hier and Fremont and Ruth Alder came on board as new members at Desert Chapel. They had an idea for a new group for the church—the Chargers were organized in 1984. The Chargers had a vision and energy to carry it out. Their idea was to plan fund raisers and help all areas of the local church and to give to needed projects for others.



Eventually, it came down to pancakes and sausage breakfasts served the third Saturday morning October through March. The Chargers also do December Christmas caroling and deliver Cheer baskets to home bound church family members.

Beginning in the 1980's, the Women's Society of Christian Service and then the United Methodist Women began sharing funds and caring for a young woman in Tonga—Susie Tomalalice. Susie would write detailed letters to the women describing her work in Tonga. Eventually, Susie came to Arizona and brought to the church a group of Tonga young men and women who gave a musical program for the church.

Margaret Nichols, President of the United Methodist Women was given the Bark Cloth Mural by Susie's mother in appreciation of the years of caring. The mural has hung in Woeller Hall for many years and plans are underway to repair it and place it under glass.

Then later in the 1990's after the Tonga United Methodist Church had been founded in Mesa, the Desert Chapel U.M.Y.F. did a fundraiser for their youth group and had a joint meeting.

When Woeller Hall became the Church Sanctuary, the original Desert Chapel was made into classrooms, glass block windows became doors. The first room was the Youth Room and the room adjacent to the Dining Room became a prayer chapel—at first open twenty-four hours a day.

This happened because Marguerite Wirt had told Pastor Jon about the promise given to her by the District Supt. when Desert Chapel became Methodist. He had told her that Desert Chapel would always be a small chapel. Time had proven him wrong so Pastor Jon made a small prayer chapel for Marguerite. In 1990 Alice Sinnard donated a small organ to the prayer chapel. It was used for a while. Now the Quilters of Desert Chapel use the room.

### **New Sanctuary – Building # 5 – 1988**

But Desert Chapel was destined to build again—this time a new church sanctuary. In 1984 when Pastor Jon was getting acquainted, he met Sumner and Cleo Sowers—winter residents from Minnesota. Sumner found the folding chairs very uncomfortable sitting and told Pastor Jon—“we need a new church.” He said it with such vigor that Pastor Jon told others—“Sumner Sowers says we need a new church.”

And one Sunday in 1985, Sumner was asked to give a talk during morning worship on the need for a new Sanctuary. That night, in a dream, his mother visited him and said, “Well done, my son.

Of course the idea of a new sanctuary had begun in 1983 and on April 10, 1983 before Pastor Jon arrived, there was a balance of \$8,870.50 in the Building Fund, shown on a poster with a thermometer marked in red

By February 1985 there was a Building Committee with Oral Wiley as Chairman. Two other members of the Building Committee were Alvina Swindler and Manfred Toland.

There is an album of pictures showing the building of the Sanctuary in the Church Archives. Among those pictures there is one of Orley Wiley wearing a red hard hat and on the hat it says, "BOSS."

To get the project started, Rev. Jon organized a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Desert Chapel becoming Methodist on September 17, 1987. It was a wonderful celebration telling the highlights of those thirty years.

It was quite a day—former pastors returned—Rev. Howard Brown, Rev. and Mrs. Charles Wharton and Rev. and Mrs. Hal Kingsley. And following the 9 a.m. Worship Service, Rev. Don Cooke, District Superintendent joined the group and encouraged the two hundred people present to see the church as "the faith and hope factory".

The project of building the new church sanctuary took most of the year 1988. The first service in the new church sanctuary was Christmas Eve of 1988. The sanctuary was not completed until 1989 and the windows were either plain window glass or glass block.

The architect planned a church built in the Akron style with a floor slanting down to the front and the pews placed on the angle. The choir loft was where the bell choir is now located.

When Woeller Hall was no longer needed for worship; a wall of cupboards was erected with a closet for choir robes behind the shelves. The Church Office and the Pastor's Office were on the exterior classrooms of Woeller Hall.

The Stained Glass windows of the Sanctuary are a wonderful story in themselves. Marguerite Wirt and her daughters Peggy Lou and Evelyn Wahl in the basement of their home in Apache Junction made the pastel symbol windows on the side of the sanctuary. Pastor John provided the pictures from a book in his library and Oral Elhart drew the patterns for the women to follow. The stained glass was purchased from a Supply Store in Mesa.

Leo F and Marguerite Wirt and their children Peggy Lou Wirt, Dora Smigal, Evelyn Wahl, Leo A. Wirt, Betty Ann Muscato, and Caroline Wirt gave all expenses for these windows.

Oral Elhard also designed the lovely center Stained Glass Window. Oral Elhard, Doc Bruns, Rodger Dos and Bud Baxter did the kneeling figure of Christ and the lower portion of the window. Marguerite and Peggy Lou Wirt did the rainbow and the surrounding upper portion of window.

The Stained Glass United Methodist Symbol at the top was the inspiration of Bud and Ruth Baxter and was made by Pat Wagaman and Bud Baxter. The glass was purchased by the Chargers in memory of Rollie Heir who had been President of the Chargers from 1984 until 1999.

The Stained Glass Window in the Cry Room was a gift from Marguerite Wirt's home church—First United Methodist of Beaverton, Michigan.

When it seemed all the stained glass projects were over, it was discovered that the winter sun glanced off the high windows on each side and made it difficult for those in the front pews to see. Thus Pat and Alice Wagaman purchased the glass and Pat, Alice and Bud Baxter designed and made the six windows, thus solving a real problem for those sitting in the front pews.

The ministry of Pastor Jon Ierly and Rev. Ken Harris, Associate was a busy, happy productive seven years. The Ierlys were a unique and wonderful family. But at Annual Conference in 1991, the Ierlys were transferred to Tucson and Rev. S. Lewis Lyon and his wife Gwen were assigned to Desert Chapel.

The farewell party for the Ierlys was very special. First, there was the usual Sunday afternoon Open House and following that everyone was invited to the home of Kent and Mary Ann Slocum for supper and a pool party

### **The Ministry of Rev. Louie Lyons 1991-1997**

And Desert Chapel welcomed the Lyons family—Rev. Louie and Gwen and their son and daughter—Norman and Heather, both college students.

These are the words of Lay Leader, Marguerite Wirt in 1991 about the Lyons.

“I appreciate our new Pastor Louie Lyon and his family. He too is sincere, hard working and a God loving man. He is dedicated to lifting us out of our financial woes and leading this church on a more restful path. His wife Gwen is loved daily for her great smile and her friendly greetings to everyone. What a wonderful personality she has—to meet her once is to have always known her.”

The Lyons had a home of their own in Scottsdale so the decision was made to sell the parsonage and give the pastor a housing allowance.

The house that had been a home for the Browns, the Whartons, the Kingsleys and the Ierlys was sold. From time to time in the Minutes of the Church Council there were references to painting the parsonage, repairing bathrooms in the parsonage, carpeting the parsonage and of course news of getting the parsonage ready for the new pastor.

It had been well lived in and in 1992 it was sold for \$42,000.00 and became a home for a family in Apache Junction.

For the first years of Rev. Lyon's ministry the descriptive words were growth of those attending worship and expanded energy to pay off the mortgage of the new sanctuary. The membership was 313, there were three services of worship every Sunday morning and there were 1200 units on the church mailing list.

Winter residents were very attracted to the ministry of Rev. Louie Lyon. Each Sunday's bulletin listed the amount of the Building Fund and the amount of the offering for the previous Sunday and the amount remaining to be paid.

During the ministry of Louie Lyon new members joined in great numbers and pictures in the Church Archives attest to that fact. Each February, Louie would have Golden Wedding Sunday to honor couples married for fifty years—1993—96 couples, 1994—106 couples, 1995—71 couples, 1996—150 couples..

Optimism gave way to concern in the spring of 1993 when Gwen Lyon became ill with cancer. Worship was changed to one service at 9:30 a.m. so Rev. Louie would have more time to spend with Gwen. She went home to be with her Lord in the fall of 1993.

The Charge Conference report had this to say about Gwen. "She was so excellent to work with. Her drive to have the Mission and the Outreach of the church succeed will never be forgotten."

In June of 1991 when Pastor Louie arrived on the scene, the church owed \$650,000. in Building Debt. By June 1994 it had been reduced to \$120,000. due to his passion and leadership and to the committed lay people of Desert Chapel.

### **Remodeling the Church Sanctuary – 1995**

Five years in the new sanctuary found an attitude of frustration for church staff and officers. They had a great deal if the mortgage paid off, they had a lovely new sanctuary but the offices were crowded and inefficient, the choir was unhappy with practicing in Woel-

ler Hall and needing to have a “run through” in the sanctuary and the choir loft was too small for seating the choir members.

Rev. Lyon thought the Akron Styled arrangement of the sanctuary was out of the dark ages. He suggested a center aisle and a level floor.

The answer to the situation came with a program entitled “Vision 2000 Planning Committee.” Nine hundred questionnaires were sent out and when they were compiled—the following was the report. Pat Wagaman was the Chairman of the program.

#### VISION 2000 PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 1) Add a full time Associate Pastor with emphasis on youth and young adult ministry.
- 2) Later on add a part time Senior Activities Director.
- 3) Establish a contemporary service now.
- 4) Remodel the Sanctuary—more pews, new offices, Choir Room, Higher Ceiling over the choir, add parking space, provide better facilities for Church School.
- 5) Establish an Endowment Fund as an on going source of income for the Church--\$100,000. as a minimum base.

Vision 2000 reflected the attitude of the congregation. Desert Chapel had a Church Conference and voted on the remodeling. The Redden Construction Company with Mike Raymond as Superintendent received the contract for the job at a total cost of \$250,000. The vote was a resounding yes and the project proceeded.

It would take six months to complete. The floor and pews would be removed and worship would be moved back to Woeller Hall for the summer. It was a summer of construction barriers, dirt and heat.

By the first Sunday in November 1996, the remodeling was complete. There was a Choir Room, there were three offices and a workroom, a larger Narthex and the interior modeling to a center aisle, choir loft behind the Communion table and pulpit and the area for the Handbell Choir.

A major loss was the lovely oak long handmade altar rail that had been made for the original sanctuary by Ed Harris. Ed was a faithful member of the church and very active in the Methodist Men’s Club where he would cook breakfast.

Memorial trees outside the old Narthex had to be removed and the parking lot still needed care but the remodeling was complete. A joyous and satisfying event in 1995 was the marriage of Pastor Louie and Joyce Lyons. The two Associate Pastors who worked with Rev. Louie during this tumultuous time were Alicia Tomkus and Mary Benedict. Both were loved and did their best.

It is a tribute to Desert Chapel United Methodist Church that it has produced a United Methodist Pastor. In 1990 Lazlo Vega, a member of the church requested support of the church as he went through the Candidacy Process to become an ordained pastor. The Church, the United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Men and The Chargers all gave both financial and spiritual support to Lazlo in this very challenging process.

In 1993, when Lazlo was a student at Perkins Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas, he served as Assistant Pastor at Desert Chapel during the summer months. This was the summer that Gwen Lyon was so ill and his presence was a real blessing.

In time Lazlo duly graduated and was ordained. He has been assigned to pastorates at Las Vegas—Heritage UMC, Shepherd of Pines at Overgaard and currently is at Phoenix Epworth UMC.

After the remodeling was completed, the church enjoyed a few months of happiness, tranquility and continual growth. Desert Chapel was in debt but it seemed manageable.

The payments were something like \$3,600. a month for debt retirement and interest.

And the Endowment Fund had been established and was increasing in amounts that seemed like security was coming to Desert Chapel. And membership was up to 356.

### **Consideration of Perennial Concerns**

As the Historian read the Minutes of the years between 1990 and the present time (2006) she observed that the same recurring issues and on going projects took much of the time of the trustees and committee members. These are as follows:

The problems of theft break ins, vandalism, the alarm system, weeds, and termites control all surfaced regularly.

The Trustees found themselves with continuous maintenance problems on heat pumps and air conditioning the Education Unit and Fellowship Hall and Woeller Hall.

The continual water erosion on the parking lot and subsequent repairs and ultimately paving the parking lot was a very large issue for the Trustees also.

The Memorial Church Library had been the long-term project of the UMW and the problem of moving it brought pain to many people.

The remodeling of the church kitchen was a large project that most of the church groups cooperated to do. It coincided with the decision to hook up with the Apache Junction sewer system. This meant digging up concrete and pavement and the abandonment of two septic tanks.

The Missions Committee at this time declared Desert Chapel to be A Mission To Desert Chapel and a Mission to the World. Many major on going projects were begun that are still continuing in 2006. These are too numerous to mention but Desert Chapel is indeed in Mission to Apache Junction and to the World.

The need for a church van or bus had also been a recurring issue. It was combined with the concern for an appropriate building for storage of the vehicle. This issue was eventually solved with the purchase of a 15 passenger van and the erection of a steel building in the south west corner of the church property—Building # 6.

### **The Ministry of Rev. Michael Higgs 1997 - 2002**

Things changed for Desert Chapel when at Annual Conference in 1997 it was announced that Rev. Louie Lyons and Joyce were to be transferred to Sun City and Michael Higgs and his wife Diana were to be assigned to Desert Chapel.

With the departure of Rev. Lyons, many of the winter residents found somewhere else to worship. The recent history of Desert Chapel might have had a different story to tell if Rev. Lyons could have stayed until the project had been completed and paid for.

Pastor Mike and his wife Diana came here with almost thirty years of experience. Pastor Mike had a love for young people. Though he was an introvert he inaugurated the Stephen Ministries program and was active in evangelism. He was difficult to hear in the pulpit but it got better with a lapel microphone and the new sound system.

There was no longer money for a full time Associate Pastor but Rev. Ken Harris, was still living in his mobile home on church grounds and he was happy to help out in part time ministry. And in 1992, Rev. Harris gave his mobile home to the church and they sold it for \$4,500.

Many good things happened during Pastor Mike's Ministr

Keith Wells became Director of Joy Bells and the Choir

Leo Katz became Youth Director and began KICKS—Kids In Christ and Timbrels and also had UMYF

Susi Warring began Kyle's Komputer Room and related Christian Education

Chargers and Youth held a Spaghetti Supper to purchase needed youth supplies

Seven Stephen Ministers were commissioned

Disciples Class was completed

Vacation Bible School was changed to Spring Break in 1999.

The Church Mortgage of \$3,500. continued to be a heavy burden. Vision 2000, completed in 1995 was still having an effect on church programming in 2000. In Vision 2000, Desert Chapel had declared itself to be a "turn around church".

In August 2000 five members went to Kansas City for a School of Congregational Development. It focused on marketing and visibility of the church and so Desert Chapel began the following events.

Block parties began to happen twice a year—summer and fall. There could be 200 to 300 people plus greyhounds gathered at Desert Chapel for the event. And Desert Chapel got a Website.

Desert Chapel also began an expanded ministry with children and youth and considered small group ministry and began the Contemporary Worship Service in Woeller Hall. These began immediately in 2000 and continued until 2002.

Also in 2002 the Nomads came for a week to make repairs for Desert Chapel property and to replace the carpet in Woeller Hall. The Nomads are a group of retired persons who come in their Recreational vehicles to help local churches who set the agenda of what is to be done.

There was enough money remaining from the budget for the Nomads to pave the enlarged parking lot. There are wonderful pictures in the Church Archives of children enjoying the new parking lot.

But as one reads the Minutes of the Desert Chapel Church Council one reads:

"2000—third year of not paying apportionments. maybe we can get through the summer by borrowing from reserves

. Sunday December 31 designated as a 13<sup>th</sup> month encouraging people to give what they normally give per month to offset deficit for the year

.2001 –encourage people to give a portion of their income tax refund to the church –Goal to be \$6,000. It was indeed a serious time for Desert Chapel.



## **The Ministry of Galene Boyett 2002 -**

At Annual Conference in 2002, Mike Higgs was assigned to Griffith UMC, Las Vegas and Galene Boyett was appointed as pastor at Desert Chapel. She was fresh out of Seminary with experience as a student pastor in New Jersey. Galene came as a second career pastor complete with a supportive husband and three sons. It also helped that her father is a retired pastor and that she grew up in the desert southwest.

When Galene arrived she found the roof and ceiling of the new narthex destroyed. These had leaked almost from the beginning but the July monsoon completed the destruction.

After much discussion and delays, the decision was made to take the bid of Tosco for \$8,000. A newer church member Suz Anne Christ agreed to serve as Interior Decorator for the interior of the Narthex.

The problem of the huge Mortgage bill each month was then tackled. Permission was obtained to use Designated Funds, Endowment Funds, and Estate Income to get some breathing room.

It seemed every spring when the winter visitors were ready to depart, depression would set in and one would hear: "Is the church going to close?" Will it be open when we get back next fall?" "What can be done?"

In March 2005, on Sunday morning Norman Ross the Church Treasurer said, "If something isn't done, we are in bad shape."

The next week at the Church Council meeting, Fremont Alden, Choir member since 1982 and 94 years old stood up to speak. He suggested that since we owed \$125,000 yet on the mortgage, we could pay it off if 100 people would give or loan \$1,000 or more if they could afford to do so. That way we could pay off the mortgage by the end of 2005.

At this same meeting it had been announced that an anonymous donor had given \$21,000 to take the church through the summer. Immediately at the Council meeting, eight persons each pledged \$1,000 each. When the church family at worship heard about Fremont's idea money, loans and gifts came in. There were some donations of \$5,000 asking only that \$2,000 be repaid.

Fremont had suggested that all loans that were to be repaid should be put in a hat and names drawn out one at a time to be repaid one a month beginning with the loans due widows.

The Quilters also hand quilted an antique quilt top that they sold chances on with the proceeds going to pay off the mortgage.

The final mortgage payment was mailed on February 28, 2006 and on Sunday, March 5<sup>th</sup> there was a wonderful celebration complete with Choir concert, mortgage shredding and punch and cake. There still remained \$15,000 to be repaid to church members but the congregation felt optimistic and hopeful again.

It must be mentioned that Marguerite Wirt, the founder of Desert Chapel continued her support of the church right up to the moment the Lord called her home.

One of her last good deeds was to write her memories of the process of building the church in the book "An Answered Prayer". Her service of celebration was held at Desert Chapel United Methodist Church on Saturday, November 22, 2003. Her cremains (ashes) and those of Leo F. Wirt are under the tree near the Memorial Cross Tower.

On February 26, 2006 members of the Conference Committee on Board of Ordained Ministry were present at Desert Chapel to listen to Galene conduct worship and preach. This is one of the final steps before she was approved to be ordained as a full member of the Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church. The congregation supports all efforts in her behalf for this event.

On Saturday, June 10, 2006 at First U M C in Phoenix, Bishop Minerva G. Carcano and the District Superintendents of the Desert Southwest Conference ordained Galene with thirty persons from her family and her church supporting and rejoicing with her.

### **Mission Outreach Support of Desert Chapel**

To conclude this history, one has to list the great mission outreach of Desert Chapel even while the church was struggling to survive.

The Worship Committee meets monthly and provides training and support for acolytes, liturgists, communion stewards, communion servers, greeters, ushers and worship leaders. They also plan and conduct extremely creative, meaningful worship opportunities for the Sundays of the Christian year.

The Education Committee provides Adult, Youth and Children's classes and supportive services such as Children's Choir and Vacation Bible School, Youth Fellowship and Mission projects.

The Missions Committee provides a monthly opportunity for continuous opportunities of service—Monthly Meal for Homeless, UMCOR Kits, Operation Hope, Hope Women's Center, Food Bank, Apache Junction Sidewalk Sunday School and any Volunteers in Mission participants

United Methodist Women and its prior organization, the Women's Society of Christian Service has always supported the church and its mission program with zest and determination.

The UMW keeps busy with its Pledge to Missions, serving lunch at funerals, serving wedding receptions, and with fund raising events—two or three a year. They also have regular commitments of World Thank Offering, Designated and Undesignated Giving, Week of Prayer and Self Denial and their relationship to Church Women United. They have a Reading Program and support the local church to the best of their ability.

The United Methodist Men had a long and successful record of study and of service to the local church, they were forced to disband in 2002 because of the age of their members and the record of their existence is in the Church Archives.

The Chargers—active and vital since 1984 continue with their Pancake and Sausage Breakfasts from October through March and the funds earned are given to many worthwhile projects. They love to go Christmas caroling and to deliver the Cheer Baskets; they are truly a remarkable organization.

The Choir has always been an integral part of Desert Chapel. There was a children's choir even before there was a church building at Desert Chapel. There has never been a time in all these years that there was not a church choir. Music and the Christian faith is a solid unit in Desert Chapel.

The Hand bell Choirs are also a great gift to the church and have been for the past twelve years. As a part of vision 2000 it was determined that the church needed a Hand bell choir. The bells and the necessary equipment were paid for by donations from church people. De Anne Fraley, the organist and choir director at the time arranged classes for those who wanted to learn to play the bells. Alice Wagaman is now the director of both Hand bell choirs—the Joyful Noise and the Joy Bells.

The Emmaus Group is a group that encourages spiritual growth. There have been many walks to Emmaus in the past two decades. This non-denominational spiritual growth group is very active in the entire Valley. Many from Desert Chapel attend the Emmaus area gatherings at Grace United Methodist Church and are deeply involved in Desert Chapel spirituality.

The Trustees and the Administrative Council of Desert Chapel are the heartbeat of the church. Their devotion, commitment, energy and life skills are poured into the programming and the preservation and continuous use of our buildings. The record of the

service of these two groups is on file in the Church Archives and provide much information on how and why this church has endured and progresses over the years.

In May of 2006, after the church had served a meal to the Hungry and Homeless since November of 2005 on the third Saturday of every month, it was decided to open Woeller Hall for a time each weekday to provide an air conditioned place for the Homeless. Soon people had brought cases of bottled water for them and the next need was a noon meal.

With the help of committed Christians at Desert Chapel Genesis was born. Genesis is a group of people from other committed churches who joined hands with Desert Chapel in providing these noon meals. Desert Chapel provides Monday and Love Gospel Tuesday, St. George's Catholic Wednesday, Gold Canyon UMC Thursday and Friday for a time was Red Mountain UMC but now is the Christian Church of A.J.

The community of Apache Junction has been especially gracious and giving—many cafes and other stores share and we have room for storage. Clothing and bedding and many other objects needed by Homeless people keep rolling in, day by day.

Now in 2007, Genesis is actively working with the city of Apache Junction to find funds to provide a facility for housing the homeless and also using this facility to help them find jobs and end the cycle of homelessness. The beat goes on and Desert Chapel United Methodist Church continues its record of service.

## **CHARTER MEMBERS**

DESERT CHAPEL METHODIST CHURCH

Organized September 21, 1957

By Hershel H. Hedgpeth, District Superintendent

Arizona District The Methodist Church

Leo F. Wirt	Harry M. Brown	Helen Ferguson
Marguerite Wirt	Edna M. Brown	Julia Stearman
Nancy Ferguson	Evelyn Wirt	Frances Patterson
Gladys E. Kidder	Lois Krieg	Norman L. Pason
Charles P. Kidder	Evelyn M. Teason	Gerald N. Teason
Ethel Virginia Crispin	Jacqueline J. Teason	Robert Rea Crispin
Mildred Burkholder	Mildred G. Marks	Peggy Lou Wirt
Earl Burkholder	Grace L. Smith	Everett B. Smith
Carolyn Ogrelta Wirt	Ruth Dayfield	Leo A. Wirt
Belva Dora Wirt	Louise Dayfield	Eula Becker
Robert Pounder	Edna B. Pounder	Hiram Becker
Helen Ferguson fer	John G. Marks	Theressa M. Shef-
George P. Sheffer	Virginia Edgman	Stella M. Elsen
Elmer C. Hugg	Emma A. Hugg	Belva B. Cornell
Betty Ann Muscato		

**ROLLOF HONOR OF CHURCH STAFF**

**Through the years**

1952 – 1957      Rev. Showalters, Rev. Keith Leafdale, Mr. Dingman

1957 –1962      Rev, Fred Ferguson (Helen)  
 1962 – 1968      Rev. Howard Brown (Mary) Kathy, Laura, Steve  
 1969 – 1976      Rev. Charles Wharton (Opal)  
 1976 – 1982      Rev. Harold Kingsley (Barbara) Allison and Carol

Youth Director John Winston died on 2-11-78

1982 –1983      Rev. Ray Baines  
 1983 Interim      Rev. Andy Michaelson  
 1984 – 1991      Rev. Jon Ierly (Robbie) Jimmy, Billy  
 1984 – 1992      Assistant Pastor Rev. Kenneth Harris (Marion)  
 1984 – 1992      Director of Christian Education Leone Coburn  
 1991 – 1997      Rev. S. Lewis Lyon (Gwen) Norman and Heather

Gwen died in 1993 Louie married Joyce in 1995

1993 – 1996      Assistant Pastor, Alicia Tomkus  
 1996 – 1998      Assistant Pastor Mary Benedict  
 1997 – 2002      Rev. Michael Higgs (Diane)  
                          Lee Katz and Reese Thomas, Youth Directors  
 2002 -              Rev. Galene Boyett (Alan) Jacob, Kit, Gabe

#### CONFERENCE SUPPORTIVE STAFF

Over the years

Bishop;s

1957-1972 Gerald H. Kennedy

1973-1980 Charles Golden

1981-1984 Jack Tuell

1985-1995 Elias G. Galvan

1996-2004 William W. Dew, Jr.

2005- Minerva Carcano

District Superintendents

1957 Hershel H. Hedgpeth

1961 Chilton M. Pheeters

1967 George Manor

1970 Charles S. Kendall

1973 Bob Stanley

1979 DonBrummet

1981 Gene Collett

1987 Don Cooke

1990 DeWayne Zimmerman

1996 Larry Hinshaw

2000 Jane Tews

2005 Sharon Ragland