

## **Saw mill to solar — history of the Medford United Methodist Church**

Over 100 years ago, (1875) the first sermon in Medford was preached by a Methodist woman, Mrs. Pitcher, in a saw mill. Here begins the story of the group of people who called themselves Methodists from that time to the present.

In 1879, the congregation built Medford's second church. (The first church built in Medford was the Holy Rosary Catholic Church.) The church, located on Park Avenue, was a handsome, clapboard building of simple lines in a vernacular Gothic style. The first minister noted in the church records was Rev. Charles Barker who came to the congregation in 1882. Mrs. Grace Allman recalled walking from her home in the country to that first church on cold winter mornings. The minister's wife would take the family into the parsonage kitchen to warm them around the wood burning stove before they went into the church for the Sunday service.

In 1920, District Superintendent Kundert purchased the Winchester Hotel on South Main Street. He had the building razed and used the lumber and other materials to build churches and parsonages all over Northern Wisconsin. Medford's second Methodist Church building was erected in 1921 on the site of the former hotel. For 60 years, this building was known as "the church on Main Street". It featured a rounded sanctuary paneled in dark, glowing oak with cathedral like stained glass windows. Two interesting features of the building complex were a horse stall in the rear (which accounted for the back entrance) and a gymnasium. This gymnasium, which was very popular with young people in the city, was built about 1924 by Rev. David LaVinn who was a convert from Judaism. The mortgage on this building was burned on October 1, 1944. Among the participants in that happy event were Rev. Henry Holverson, Mrs. Harry Manney, Arthur J. Latton, Andrew Hetland and Jesse Moore. Lunch and dinner was served in the Fellowship hall for about 400 people.

The congregation was originally known as the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1946, the Congregational Church of Medford voted to merge with the Methodist Church and the name was changed to Christ Church Federated. However, in 1968, there was a national merger of the United Brethren and Methodist Churches. At that time, the name United Methodist Church was adopted.

In 1969, the congregation undertook a major face lifting project on the exterior of the "the Main Street Church". The work was done by Steel Structures, Inc. under the supervision of Lee Smith. However, the church members soon began to consider other options because of internal structural problems.

Under the direction of District Superintendent James Weiss, the District Board of Church Location and Buildings and the initiating spirit of Rev. Clem Dozer, a Building committee was formed. Officers were Corliss Jensen (chair), Phil Vincent (vice chair), Molly Shiffler (secretary) and other members Tom Clark, Elmer Hedlund, Ruth Ann Hutchinson, Glen Niemuth, Norm Perrin, Lee Smith, Bonnie Vincent, Gerald Prellwitz and Harry Allman. For the next four years, this committee was concerned with church design, construction and financing. The architect was Gary Davis of the Halbeck Group at Eau Claire, WI. The contractor was Steel Structures, Inc. with Lee Smith as foreman. The groundbreaking ceremony for the new church was held on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1981. Rev. Clem Dozer, members of the Building committee and the Sunday school participated in the service. Construction began and continued through the summer and fall of 1981. The first service in the new church was held on January 10, 1982. It began in the Fellowship hall and then moved into the new sanctuary for the remainder of the service. The new church has of two sections. One area serves a dual purpose as an educational facility and Fellowship hall. The second is the octagon shaped sanctuary. Seating in the round with large chancel pieces in the center provides a focus of worship that denotes the concept of Christians worshiping around a table in the manner of Christ and his disciples. The Good Shepherd window is featured in a lighted case above the main sanctuary entrance door.

It was 20 years on April 25, 1982, since the construction of the new church was completed. Over the years, improvements have been made largely to maintain the building and property. In the fall of 1999, a shed was constructed behind the church to act as storage.

With our continued growth and ever changing needs, our congregation is setting its sights to more improvements as it continues to grow in the Medford community.

**List of pastors from 1882 to 2015:**

- 1882 Charles Barker
- 1887 O. H. P. Smith
- 1890 H. B. Brenneman
- 1893 J. W. Speer
- 1901 W. F. DeLap
- 1903 P. J. Stair
- 1905 S. W. Ingham
- 1906 J. A. Hall
- 1907 R. D. Dunn
- 1910 John I. Sainty

1912 J. Wilkenson  
1913 J. B. Gibson  
1914 Thomas Harris  
1916 J. F. Morgan  
1918 J. H. Chatterson  
1920 Nelson J. Alderson  
1923 David LaVinn  
1926 James A. Moats  
1930 Donald Mills  
1933 Peter Holms  
1935 Calvin Graves  
1936 A. Langendorff  
1942 Henry Holverson  
1949 Douglas K. Marks  
1957 Gordon Welch  
1962 William Warner  
1967 Henry Bahrenberg, Jr.  
1974 Ray Gurney  
1976 Clem Dozer  
1982 James Rowlette  
1987 Robert Linaberry Charis  
1994 Calmer Overlein (interim)  
1994 Terry Erickson  
1997 Henry H. Hall  
1999 Irving W. Case  
2006 Dennis E. Govier  
2009 Dr. Clem Dozer (interim)  
2009 Michael O Adedokum  
2012 Kyochul Shin