

HISTORICAL RECORD OF RIVERSIDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Late in 1953 the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church instructed Elizabeth City District Superintendent C. Freeman Heath to begin a church in the rapidly expanding Riverside section of Elizabeth City. At the same time the conference appointed a pastor, the Reverend Richard T. Commander, to the as yet non-existent church. The Rev. Mr. Commander and his wife, Lelia, traveled back and forth from Gates County, where they still served a three-point charge. They visited from house to house in the Riverside section, making use of a survey that the Fellowship Class (Young Adults) of First Methodist Church had taken the previous summer.

In January of 1954 a parsonage was purchased from Mrs. Tommy Gray on West Williams Circle, with the help of a \$5,000 loan from a member of First Methodist Church. The Commanders moved to Elizabeth City, and the first service for the new church was held on February 5, 1954. Forty persons attended that service. The Sunday School began with an Adult Class and a nursery.

The church was officially chartered on April 12, 1954, with 57 members. A site for the new church building was bought, located on the corner of Edgewood and Parkview Drives. The cost was \$7,500. Shortly afterward the conference's Methodist Ten Dollar Club gave the church \$20,000 to help construct the building. Riverside was one of two churches to receive the first grants this group awarded. Architects for the building project were Williams, Coile & Blanchard of Newport News, Virginia. The contractor was J. N. Bryan & Son, of Raleigh, N. C.

Meanwhile, the church members continued meeting in the parsonage. A lectern and some hymnals were loaned from City Road Methodist Church. As the church grew it soon filled the parsonage, with one class even meeting in the kitchen. Class groups overflowed into the living rooms of surrounding homes. The Sunday School grew to an average attendance of about 80, total church membership to 117. The church had an active Women's Society of Christian Service and a Methodist Youth Fellowship. The Adult Choir was organized, and sang to the accompaniment of Mrs. Commander's piano. The Methodist Men's Club began meeting on Wednesday, May 26, 1954.

In addition to the money from the Ten Dollar Club, and the amount borrowed from loan companies, the members of the church found many ways to raise money for the costs involved. One hundred dollar second mortgage bonds were sold, amounting to \$16,500. First Methodist Church helped monetarily. Several fish fries were held on the church grounds. Bazaars and sales of used clothing, pen and pencil sets, and Christmas cards were organized. The Baldwin organ was acquired by making a drawing, which showed all parts of the organ. The various

parts were then "sold" to members and friends. When someone "bought" a part of the organ by donating the appropriate amount of money, his name and donation were written on that part in the chart.

Other friends gave of themselves in various ways. A friend of the church made and donated the offering plates. A church member made the pine and plywood pulpit, lectern, altar and rail, and gave them to the church. A member of First Methodist Church gave 50 folding chairs to be used for seating in the sanctuary, and more were borrowed from City Road Methodist Church. The Elizabeth City District provided furniture for the parsonage. A friend in the community had several flowering trees planted on the church grounds (crepe myrtle and dogwood). A church member made and set up the outdoor bulletin board near the front of the lot. People in town gave several pianos to the church. One member extended the sidewalk out over the ditch at the side of the church, and gave the lamp that stood near it.

The Ground Breaking Ceremony was held on August 8, 1954. The program opened with an invocation by the Reverend D. J. Reid of City Road Methodist Church. The Reverend Tom Collins of the Board of Church Extension gave the greeting, and the pastoral prayer was offered by the Rev. Mr. Commander. The Rev. Mr. Heath led the service of dedication, and the Reverend R. L. Jerome of First Methodist Church pronounced the benediction. After the service those present shared a picnic supper.

The first service in the church building was held on October 23, 1955. The Rev. Mr. Commander preached at the 11:00 a. m. worship service, and the Rev. Mr. Heath preached at the 7:30 service that evening. By this time there were 11 Sunday School classes, so every classroom was in use. Two classes met in each of three department-sized rooms.

The Rev. Mr. Commander served at Riverside from 1954 until 1959. While they were here he and his wife adopted a baby daughter, Suzanne.

The next minister appointed to the church was the Reverend J. Earl Richardson. He and his wife, Alice, and their two young children, John and Betty, moved into the parsonage in June of 1959. The Rev. Mr. Richardson was partially blind, and read from a Braille Bible. His wife and a few of the young people of the church gave of their time to drive him on his errands. Under his leadership the WSCS expanded to a three-circle organization, and there were two MYF groups meeting every Sunday night. On April 9, 1961, the church celebrated the seventh anniversary of its charter Sunday. The Rev. Mr. Commander was invited to return for the celebration, and he preached the anniversary sermon. The Children's Choir, which had been started during the Rev. Mr. Commander's tenure, and continued by the Rev. Mr. Richardson, sang "Fairest Lord Jesus."

The third minister to serve at Riverside was the Reverend Robert F. Bundy. He and his wife, Inez, moved into the parsonage in June of 1961. During the time they were in Elizabeth City a family from Riverside was

chosen as the Methodist Family of the Year from the Elizabeth City District. In 1964 the church reached its tenth anniversary, and the second mortgage bonds sold in 1954 came due. The holders gave some to the church and others were paid off. The note, which was due, was renewed. The Rev. Mr. Bundy and his wife added a daughter, Lori, and a son, Robbie, to their family while they were at Riverside.

In 1966 the Reverend Lawrence A. Green, his wife Naomi, and their son Clyde (a college student), came to Riverside. While the Rev. Mr. Green was in Elizabeth City several improvements were made in the church building. In 1967, aluminum siding was installed, at a cost of \$2,100. In October of 1969 the baptismal font was donated by the family and friends of a church member who had died. Nineteen pews were installed in April of that year, given by church families to replace the folding chairs that had been used for more than 14 years. The church altar area was remodeled when a church member, to match the pews, refinished the pulpit, lectern, altar and rail. The central section and the choir area were raised several inches above floor level, with material and labor donated by church members. In 1969 and 1970 new hymnals were purchased with money donated by church groups, members and friends. Red carpet was installed over the linoleum in the altar area and aisles of the sanctuary in 1970, at a cost of \$625. In 1971 a propane gas cooker was built and donated to the church by the Methodist Men's Club, to be used for church suppers. In the fall of 1969 a young person, a member of Riverside's MYF, was elected to the presidency of Elizabeth City's United Christian Youth Movement.

The Rev. W. Thomas Clarke, with his wife Alexanne, and their children Lisa, Brantley and Holt, moved into the Riverside parsonage in June of 1971. During his year at the church the Reverend Mr. Clarke became ill, and had to be placed in a Norfolk, Virginia hospital for several weeks. While he was there the Reverend Robert McKenzie, District Superintendent, filled the pulpit.

The next pastor to serve at Riverside was the Reverend Bobby P. Tyson. With his wife Jetta, and their children Gail, Alice, Bobby Jr., and Sharon, he moved into the parsonage in June of 1972. For the next two years the church continued its work in the community, district and conference.

In 1974 the Reverend Ivey J. Wall, Jr. came to Elizabeth City with his wife Lynn, and their two sons, Ralph and Randy. Under the Rev. Mr. Wall's guidance the debt which the church had been under since 1954 was paid off. In 1976 the parsonage was enlarged. Added to the original structure were a utility room, second bathroom, bedroom and den. Central heat and air conditioning were installed at the same time. At the church a new Sunday School class for adults was started, called the Study-Discussion Class. It offered an alternative to the more traditional Adult Class.

The Rev. Mr. Wall was killed in an automobile accident on the Chowan River Bridge, Route 17, on April 16, 1977. Mrs. Wall and her sons remained in the parsonage until June, while the Reverend Norwood Jones, District Superintendent, and the Reverend Charles McKenzie, associate pastor at First United Methodist Church filled the Rev. Mr. Wall's pulpit.

The Reverend William M. Presnell came to Riverside in June of 1977. Since the debt had been paid off under the Rev. Mr. Wall, the church could now be dedicated. The Service of Dedication was held on July 24, 1977, with the Rev. Mr. Jones and the Rev. Mr. Presnell officiating. At the same service the new Allen organ was dedicated. Those attending were invited to a fellowship luncheon immediately afterwards.

Soon after the Rev. Presnell came to Elizabeth City it was discovered that termites had done extensive damage to the church, which had to be repaired. A great deal of renovation was done on the church in the next year and a half. The kitchen was moved to the same side of the building as the Sunday School classrooms, to a room which had been used for storage. It was set up and painted by church members. The pastor's study and the church office were moved to the far side of the building, where the kitchen had been. Replacing the wall between two classrooms with folding doors, which could be opened if a large area was needed, formed a fellowship hall. This fellowship hall connected to the kitchen through a serving window. The kitchen also opened to the outside, and the United Methodist Men donated labor and materials to pour a small cement stoop, and build a holding rack for the new trash cans donated by several women of the church. The heating system was updated, and central air conditioning was installed in the summer of 1978. New pulpit furniture was acquired with money donated by church members and friends—a single pulpit, an altar table and two altar chairs; and many members and friends donated money for the altar rail in the memory of the Rev. Mr. Wall. A church member made a kneeling pad from materials purchased by the United Methodist Women. Red panes were installed in the windows on either side of the altar area, and the choir loft was raised above the level of the rest of that area.

In the fall of 1978 wall-to-wall carpeting was laid in the sanctuary. At the parsonage a cement driveway was poured, and the sidewalk was extended to the street. In October the Rev. Mr. Presnell traveled to England as a representative of the North Carolina Conference, to attend the opening of Wesley's Chapel.

A new circle of United Methodist Women, called Agape Circle, began meeting in February of 1979. On March 4, 1979, Bishop Robert Blackburn visited Elizabeth City. After a reception in his honor he preached at the morning worship service at Riverside. This was a very special honor because it was the first time a bishop of the United Methodist Church had come to Riverside. In the winter and spring of 1979 a church library was set up in one of the classrooms by several of

the women of the church. Each year on Christmas Eve and again on Maundy Thursday the Rev. Mr. Presnell led the church in what were beginning to be traditional evening communion services. In 1979-80 a member of the UMYF at Riverside was elected to the presidency of both the sub-district and district Methodist Youth Fellowships. The United Methodist Women continued their traditional preparing and serving of the Upper Room Meal for the women of the church on the Wednesday of Holy Week each year. The Rev. Mr. Presnell was elected to the presidency of the Elizabeth City Area Ministerial Association for 1979-80.

In February and March of 1980 Riverside participated in the conference-wide "Proclaim the Word" program. The Reverend Robert Redmon, of Wrightsville Beach, N. C., led our revival from February 24-28. Then, from March 23-27, the Rev. Mr. Presnell went to Bon Lee, N. C., to lead their "Proclaim the Word" revival.

On May 25, 1980 Riverside celebrated Heritage Day—the 200th anniversary of the Sunday School. Members came in colonial costume, walking to church whenever possible. The Sunday School classes presented skits. Worship service was held in an overflowing sanctuary, with all music provided by guitars, banjo and bass. Dinner was served on the grounds, consisting of the types of food that would have been served 200 years ago.

At Annual Conference 1980 two members of Riverside were elected to conference agencies—Church and Society, and Religion and Race. Also, the Rev. Mr. Presnell was elected to the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference—one of the youngest ministers ever elected to it. The Conference was held at Lake Junaluska, on July 14-18. Riverside held the largest Vacation Bible School in its history on July 7-11, 1980. By the end of that July the church had completely paid off the indebtedness incurred in the 1978 renovations. A member of Riverside's UMY, while attending Annual Conference Session for Youth (ACS) at Methodist College, was elected Youth Service Fund chairperson for the Elizabeth City District, for the second consecutive year.

Bishop William R. Cannon came to the Elizabeth City District for the District Lay Rally. He met with the district's ministers at Riverside on Saturday, November 1, 1980, for lunch. Bishop Cannon was the second bishop to ever visit our church.

In the spring of 1981 two members of Riverside made the decision to enter the ministry. Terry Robertson left the U. S. Coast Guard, and began his student pastorate at the Rougemont Charge, Durham District, in June. Kari Peterson graduated from high school and entered Methodist College, with plans to continue on through Duke Divinity School.

Our 1981 Sunday School Rally Day had as its theme: "201:Faith Odyssey." Celebrating the 201st anniversary of the Sunday School, it looked toward the future of Christianity. Events included a poster contest, songs by the children, a skit by the Study-Discussion Class, an

informal worship service, and the burial of a time capsule containing articles that represent our faith. The time capsule is to be unearthed in the spring of 2001—20 years from now. Vacation Bible School, held June 22-26, 1981, was the largest yet. Average attendance was 45 children and 14 teachers and aides.

The next minister appointed to Riverside was the Reverend C. Arthur Wall. With his wife, Carol, and their daughters Stephanie, Sharon and Susan, he moved into the parsonage on June 18, 1981. In October of 1981 family and friends gave a new sanctuary piano to the church in memory of a member. It was dedicated on the last Sunday of October. At Riverside's 1981 Charge Conference, Terry Robertson was unanimously recommended to the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church as a candidate for ministry.

In September 1981 an organization for the children of the church began meeting. It was named Manna, involved the children in grades 1-6, and met on Sunday afternoons once a month.

Early in March 1982, Riverside held a revival. The Reverend Richard Blankenhorn led the services, and special music was enjoyed each night. The dream of a citywide food pantry was born at one of Riverside's UMW meetings early in 1982. With the support of several other churches in the area, the dream became a reality. The first Elizabeth City Area CROP Walk (Walk for the Hungry) was held in April 1982, headed by a member of Riverside. This walk helped garner support for the local food pantry, and continued for several years as an annual event. The Albemarle Food Bank/Food Pantry has become a citywide ecumenical ministry.

Several members of Riverside were trained in the Hospice Program, which is a ministry to the terminally ill. The training programs were held during the winter of 1983-84.

Christmas of 1983 fell on a Sunday. It was extremely cold, only 2 or 3 degrees above zero. After worship service, there being no meetings scheduled for the week, the church was empty until the custodian came in early the next Saturday morning. She found water standing in the hall from a burst pipe in the girls' bathroom. After the cleanup it was necessary to replace the original green and gray checkerboard pattern tile floor in the hall and narthex. A cream colored tile was selected, and the Rev. Mr. Wall drew the pattern for the cross and flame logo which was inlaid in the narthex floor. The women of the church decided that the walls looked dirty in contrast to the new floor, so the UMM painted the hall and narthex.

Early in 1984 a visitation workshop was held to help members prepare for making visits for the church. At the conclusion of this series of meetings the participants received assignments and began visiting for Riverside. Four two-sided banners, designed by the Rev. Mr. Wall and sewn by members of Riverside's Christian Needlework group, were hung from beams in the sanctuary. The banners depicted Christian symbols, and were done in colors corresponding to the seasons of the church year.

The doors of the main entrance to the church had always been white. Late in the summer of 1984 the Rev. Mr. Wall suggested that they be painted a dark red, symbolizing the blood of Christ, by which we all enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Administrative Council approved his suggestion, and it was done. By the fall of 1984 Manna had expanded to a three-class group, meeting twice a week on Thursday afternoons. The third annual CROP Walk had been a very successful event.

In a mid-year move, the Rev. Mr. Wall moved to St. Paul, N. C., in February 1985. The Reverend Timothy J. Hazen came to Riverside with his wife, Eddice, and their children Jason and Tracy. From his first Sunday the Rev. Mr. Hazen began the continuing tradition of having a children's sermon during the worship service every Sunday morning.

The Reverend Charles M. Litzenberger and his wife, Annette, came to Riverside in June of 1986. During this time the United Methodist Youth of our church grew to be a large and very active group, ministering to many local teenagers whose families had no other connection to a church. Our youth led a citywide movement, which received much media attention, to provide financial assistance to a terminally ill youngster named William Kempinger.

"Down By the Riverside", a title which won a newsletter-naming contest, was the title of the newsletter which "Rev. Charlie" began. The newsletter was put out quarterly and made use of our newly acquired bulk mail permit. Agape Circle became the "mother circle" to a group of young women from Woodland UMC in Perquimans County, by assisting them in starting their own circle of UMW.

In July of 1989 the Reverend Lawrence C. Higgins and his wife, Rhonda, and daughter, Taylor Jo, came to Riverside. A revival was held in mid-October, with the Reverend Keith Nanney as guest speaker. Our new United Methodist hymnals were dedicated in November 1989.

1990 began with a member of Riverside being named District Layperson of the Year. The sanctuary got new red wall-to-wall carpet just in time for Easter, and solar screens were installed in the windows there to diffuse sunlight. Homecoming was held on May 29, 1990, celebrating 35 years in ministry. In the fall of 1990 Riverside took part in the Conference Vitalization Project (we applied and were selected) with Dr. Steve Compton of the Methodist Building as our consultant.

In 1991 stained glass windows were installed in the sanctuary, and a new church sign was erected on the back lot. That fall the new Junior High UMY began meeting. Riverside continued to expand its activity in local mission through hosting a Thanksgiving meal for some impoverished families in November 1991, and an Angel Tree party for needy children in December.

Another member of Riverside was named District Layperson of the Year in 1992. The pews in the sanctuary were cushioned that spring, and two new Sunday School classes began meeting—a Junior High class,

and a short term class for adults on “Dealing with Divorce.” With the 1992 Lenten Season a second worship service began meeting at 8:45 a. m. The Sunday School classrooms were carpeted that spring. The Rev. Mr. Higgins began holding mid-week Bible studies for the elderly residents of the Virginia Dare Apartments. Riverside held its first family retreat October 8-10, 1992, at Camp Don Lee, near Arapahoe, N. C. Nearly 50 members attended, and our theme was: “God’s Promises: You Can’t Take Them Away from Me!” That fall a task force was formed to study the feasibility of building expansion.

In 1993 being chosen District Layperson of the Year honored a third member of Riverside. We were also proud to take home the attendance trophy from the District Lay Rally. In April, Dr. Sam Dixon, from the Methodist Building, taught a workshop on “Offering Riverside to the Community.” At a morning worship service he announced that the North Carolina Conference had recognized Riverside as a “redeveloping congregation.” With this status came a grant of \$30,000—to be used when we decide to move ahead with our building expansion. In April a new roof was put on the church, replacing the original asbestos shingles. Several members of the church, youth and adults, took part in the Emmaus Walk—a Christian retreat for church leaders. In May, another new Sunday School class began meeting, this one for young adults. A new suspended ceiling and a new lighting system was completed for the Sunday School wing.

The Reverend Samuel D. “Mack” McMillan III, his wife Paige, and their children Duncan and Hannah, came to Riverside in June of 1993. The staff at the church was increased by the advent of a pianist and a director for the children’s and youth choirs. A second Family Retreat at Camp Don Lee recharged some spiritual batteries, and helped us look forward to “New Beginnings.” (its theme)

The Rev. Mr. McMillan began holding two weekly Bible Studies at the church—one in the afternoon and another that same evening. The evening Bible study evolved into a Disciple I class. After twelve members successfully completed the course, a second Disciple I course was held. Then some members from each class came together and formed a Disciple II class. By this time several more members of Riverside had also become involved in the spiritually reviving Emmaus community, and made their “walks to Emmaus.” The Rev. Mr. McMillan began the tradition of presenting “The Living Last Supper” drama, a Holy Week play starring the men of the church. It was presented the day after our long-time tradition of “The Upper Room Meal.” These celebrations made our Holy Week a special time each year.

Our building committee hired an architect and, after visiting several churches, decided on plans for our building extension. Blueprints were drawn up and a model constructed. The plans were approved at our 1996 Charge Conference—presided over by District Superintendent Dr. William M. Presnell. Members of Riverside were proud to have our

pastor, the Rev. Mr. McMillan, published twice in The Upper Room. We enjoyed great singing and wonderful preaching at a revival led by the Reverend Francis Daniel. In 1996 we also celebrated a Pastor Recognition Sunday, which gave us a chance to—both humorously and sincerely express our appreciation for the Rev. Mr. McMillan's work among us. "Rev. Mack" was roasted after the fellowship dinner.

The men of the church poured a cement ramp leading to the back entrance, to make our building more handicapped-accessible. The Administrative Council approved regular donations to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund as a budget line item, so as to be more intentional in our local missions. We continued our practices of Angel Tree parties, Thanksgiving Meals for the elderly, "unbirthday" parties in the summer for needy children and support of the local food pantry and abused women's shelter. A new local mission for us in 1998 is the Wesley Hospitality House, for out-of-town families who have loved ones in the hospital.

For the Advent Season of 1996 the worship committee began the tradition of sponsoring an Advent Devotional Booklet written by the members of our Riverside family. This endeavor was very warmly received, and we enjoyed using the booklets daily throughout Advent. To begin the season in 1997 we passed out the second volume of our Devotional Booklet, and celebrated a "Hanging of the Greens." The evening included special songs, congregational singing, narration and costumed acting. In 1996 and 1997 Riverside won trophies in the community Christmas parade for the floats we decorated, depicting our missions in the community ('96) and keeping Christ in the heart of Christmas ('97).

In 1996 and again in 1997 Riverside was pleased to be able to meet 100% of our conference financial obligations. We participated in second-mile giving in 1997, becoming a *Rainbow Covenant* church. A new three-sided metal sign was erected around the original stone one on the front lot. The rainbow over the United Methodist cross and flame symbol proclaimed our church "A Place to Become—A Place to Belong!"

In June of 1998 the Reverend Milford Oxendine, Jr. and his wife, Jeannie, came to Riverside. This was Riverside's first cross-racial appointment, as the Oxendines were Native Americans, members of the Lumbee tribe. In July and August the Rev. Mr. Oxendine led a study on the *Bishop's Initiative for Children and the Impoverished*, attended by Riverside's Children's Ministries Team. The team took several actions as a result of the study, including planning for more child friendly worship services, expanding the Children's Worship program, and opening the church building up for use by children's services in the community. They also decided to offer a scholarship to summer camp for a needy child, and to collect school supplies for a local elementary school. As part of our ministry to the impoverished, the Team suggested that the church set a goal of giving one ton of canned goods to the Albemarle Food Bank

in 1999. In August, the Rev. Mr. Oxendine reactivated the original Adult Sunday School Class, serving as the teacher. The class was renamed the Proverbs Class. A three-night revival was held in October, with the Rev. Mr. Oxendine preaching. Our Charge Conference also met in October. Changes were made in our building extension plans, and a goal was set to break ground in the year 2000. A computer for the church office was purchased with donated funds in late October. In November, the Advent season was ushered in with a "Hanging of the Greens" service at which the 3rd edition of Riverside's own *Advent Devotional Guide* was handed out. The Rev. Mr. Oxendine also led us in creating a separate devotional guide especially for the children. The small booklet was a popular item for the season.

We were again pleased to complete 100% of our obligations to the conference, and to take part in the *Rainbow Covenant* program. We encouraged understanding of and participation in the giving to the conference missions by having each Sunday School class adopt one of the line items as their own special project. Creative ways the classes raised the funds included baking and delivery of "Cookies for Christ", sale of church license plates and pocket calendars, and the posting of "Blooming Blessings" in the church hallway.

The 1999 church year began with a daylong planning retreat held at the Kermit E. White Building on Weeksville Road. Members who came wondering what we would have to do all day long were asking by the end of the day for an extension, so as not to miss any of the planned segments. A presentation from a children's program called *Kindermusik* brought forth a recommendation that they be allowed to use the church one morning a week in exchange for one scholarship position which the church could award. Small group sessions with area chairpersons elicited a year's worth of plans. The day concluded with a meaningful Lord's Supper, at which we served one another.

Following the Rev. Mr. Oxendine's proposal, our Administrative Council was reorganized, streamlined so the reporting process could move along more smoothly. The Staff/Parish Committee began the task of writing job descriptions and contracts for all the personnel positions currently at Riverside (organist/choir director, pianist, nursery worker and custodian.) A general personnel policy was also developed. A new pianist/children's choir director was hired. The Administrative Council approved all this work. The Worship Committee, in response to the Bishop's directive to have lay people more actively involved in worship, recruited liturgists for both services from among the laity. These volunteers began serving every Sunday, leading the opening moments of worship.

In March, the Rev. Mr. Oxendine led a Spiritual Gifts workshop for the church on Sunday evenings. This was in addition to the regular weekly Bible study groups he taught on Tuesday afternoons and evenings. A representative from *Smart Start*, a community program of

children's services, came to our Administrative Council asking for a place to hold weekly play group meetings. Mindful of our resolve to be more open to opportunities for ministry to children, we were glad to open our doors to this group. Our United Methodist Youth shared an experience with us which had been very meaningful to them, as they led us on a *Walk with Peter*, an interactive trust walk which included many sensory-filled experiences and culminated in a clown-led, silent communion.

April 1999 began during Holy Week. Our traditional Upper Room Meal for the adults of the church was held. The Rev. Mr. Oxendine preached at a Maundy Thursday service which was made all the more authentic by the inclusion of a foot-washing—a first-time experience for many in the congregation. An Al-Anon group, in addition to the ones meeting on Wednesday and Friday nights, began making use of the church building for noon meetings on Mondays.

In May, the Worship Committee decided to try out a Praise Service in place of one of the two traditional worship services held each Sunday. Experimenting with placement of this service was done in June and July, with input from the congregation requested. At Annual Conference in June, the Rev. Mr. Oxendine took a leading part in the *Program of Racial Inclusiveness*. Dressed in ceremonial Native American attire, he served as the storyteller for the tale of Ishmael, told from the Native American point of view. Response from the audience was overwhelmingly approving. Also in June he traveled to Lake Junaluska to serve as a speaker for the Native American Conference.