

HISTORY OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HAZEL PARK

The First United Methodist Church of Hazel Park was established in November of 1924, as a Missionary project of the Royal Oak First Church. The first meeting was held in the Lacey School, and later moved to a feed store. One summer, the church used a tent for services. By 1926-27 a basement church, located on the property of the current church, was excavated, and would serve as the church meeting place for the next 25 years. The basement church started out with just 4 walls, but over time, improvements were made. Folding doors were installed to make a classroom (known for many years as Mrs. King's room); a furnace was installed; people donated dishes, towels, and kitchen utensils they could spare; and dinners were put on to raise money for hymn books, chairs, and other things that were needed.



Exterior of the Basement Church

Later, a chapel (shown above) was added and a large bible class was organized and met on Sunday mornings. That class, for many years, kept up the interest payment on the money borrowed for the construction of the basement.

During the Depression, the chapel was changed to provide more space. An entirely new entrance was built and cement steps were added.

Following World War II, and with the appointment of Rev. Samuel Carey, the men of the church, working alongside their pastor, erected a parsonage on the property adjoining the church.



Services were held in the Basement Church from 1927-1952



1952 groundbreaking for the present sanctuary

In 1952-53, under the leadership of Rev. Claire Wolf, the present sanctuary was built.

Total cost for the church and furnishings was \$111,000.



The new sanctuary begins to take shape

In 1961, the church purchased the property East of the sanctuary to Easterling Street, which included a building to be used for Church School work and rented properties, as well as more parking space. Nowadays referred to as the 'Church House', this building is believed to be the oldest structure in Hazel Park, dating to at least 1898. (It is shown on a plat map from that year, as part of the Felker farm).

In 1969, a new parsonage was purchased on Maple Court in Hazel Park.

For several years in the 1970's, the church extended the use of its facilities to the Korean United Methodist Church. Also in the 1970's, the annual Thanksgiving Dinner was established, and is a tradition which continued for many years.

By 1976, mortgages on all properties had been retired, leaving us without any debts.

By 1980, the parking lot had been enlarged, and classrooms were added in the basement for class and small group use.

Memorials have done much to beautify our church, and add to the atmosphere of worship. In 1985, the five East windows of the sanctuary were replaced with stained glass windows in honor and memory of many members of our congregation.

In 1987, thanks to memorial contributions, the Cross and Flame symbol was added to the South side of the bell tower. The same was added to the West side of the tower in 1988.

In 1989, six windows on the West side of the church were replaced with stained glass. Also added in 1989 was the Eternal Flame which burns in the chancel.



Our sanctuary in 2008

In 1991, chair lifts were installed to allow access to both the lower and upper levels of the building. The 1990's brought a new furnace and air conditioning, pew cushions, a new grand piano, and organ.



Our sanctuary in 2008

In 2013, in partnership with City Edge Church and the U.S. Letter Carriers' Food Drive, we began a food pantry ministry with a dedicated room in the church house. In 2016, a food pantry locker was added in our church basement.

On August 11, 2014, a record rainfall swept southeastern Michigan, resulting in heavy flooding to many homes and businesses in Hazel Park, including Hazel Park First. The church basement received substantial water damage, which took almost one year to clean-up and repair. In the summer of 2015, the refurbished basement was re-dedicated, with numerous updates and improvements including new kitchen cabinetry and countertops, new flooring, and updated lighting.

In 2015 our community outreach grew when Alcoholics Anonymous expanded their meetings in our facilities to 7 days per week.

In 2016, the bathrooms were renovated with new sinks and cabinetry.

In 2017, as a memorial to Wilfred & Virginia Webb, the handicap chair-lifts at the rear of the church were replaced with new units.

In 2020, Narcotics Anonymous began weekly meetings at our church.

Also in 2020, the COVID epidemic brought about several immediate changes, including on-line worship, on-line donations, and Zoom meetings, all of which were all quickly implemented and continue today. While in-person worship was temporarily halted, a new backsplash was installed in the church kitchen.



Newly renovated fellowship hall in 2016



Our Fellowship Hall in 2019



Our Updated Kitchen in 2020

In 2022, memorial contributions allowed for the replacement of the church roof and gutters.



Exterior view of the church in February 2023, showing new roof and gutters.

PASTORS OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HAZEL PARK

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| L. A. Bayfield | 1924 – 1927 |
| W. B. Abbott | 1927 |
| Erwin King | 1927 – 1934 |
| Wilfred Newell | 1934 |
| Arnold J. Hansen | 1934 |
| Edward C. Oliver | 1935 – 1941 |
| Dan B. Jorgensen | 1941 – 1943 |
| Paul LaFever | 1943 |
| C. E. Stedman | 1944 – 1946 |
| Samuel A. Carey | 1946 – 1950 |
| Claire A. Wolf | 1950 – 1961 |
| Bryn Evans | 1961 – 1970 |
| Sam Yearby | 1970 – 1975 |
| Reginald Cattell | 1975 – 1979 |
| Donna Lindberg | 1979 – 1983 |
| Robert Hastings | 1983 – 1987 |
| Paul Lim | 1987 – 1992 |
| David Ray | 1992 – 1994 |
| Jill Zundel | 1994 – 1999 |
| James McCallum | 1999 – 2002 |
| Mary Ellen Chapman | 2002 – 2010 |
| Cherrie Sporleder | 2010 – 2013 |
| Rochelle Hunter | 2013 – 2016 |
| Frederick G. Sampson III | 2016 – 2020 |
| Maurice R. Horne, Sr. | 2020 – 2022 |
| Brian E. Steele | 2022 – |