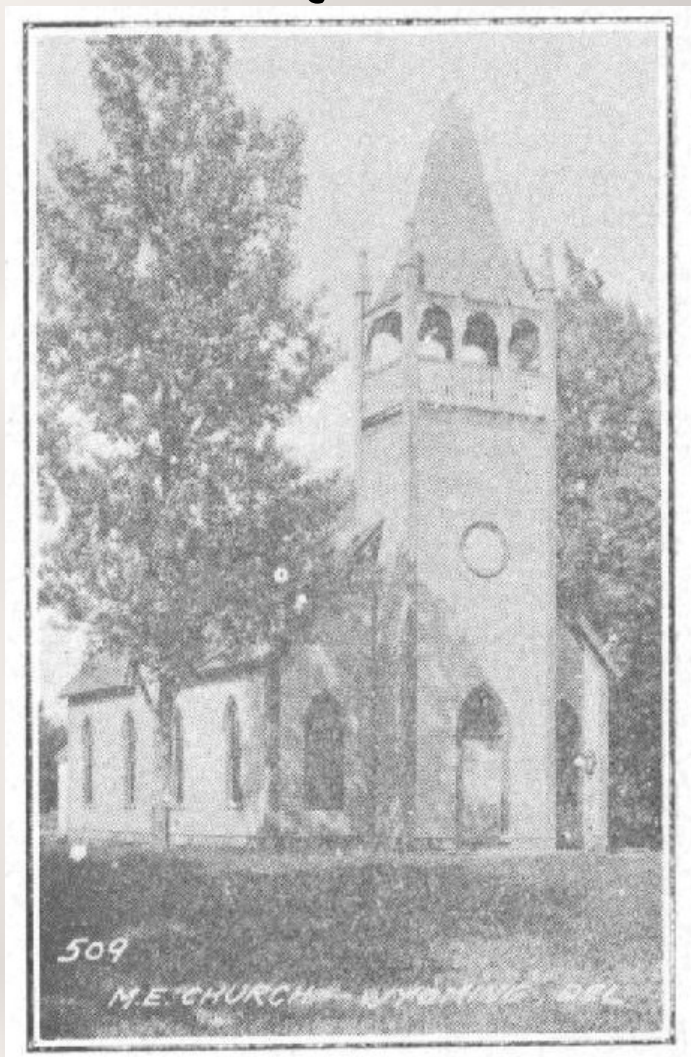


Wyoming United Methodist Church

A History

The information and photographic material in this pamphlet was compiled and edited by Doris Taylor and Don Bilow in 2006.

Updated by Renate Purdy in 2014.



IN MEMORY OF JOHN T JAKES**

Wyoming dates its existence from June 1, 1856. The Delaware Railroad was run through this town, and John T. Jakes was appointed agent for the railroad and also the agent for the Adams Express Company. He served faithfully for eleven years and resigned. There were in 1856 only two dwelling houses here. Mr. Jakes organized the Sunday school in the village, and was the leading man in building the Methodist Episcopal Church Society organized here. He was instrumental in securing the establishment of the Post Office, and was appointed postmaster on January 6, 1866, a position he held continuously until August 10, 1885. He was one of the founders of the First National Bank of Dover, Delaware. In 1869 Mr. Jakes

became connected with the Surrey Land and Lumber Association of Surrey County, Virginia.

In 1868, he was elected Grand Secretary of the State of Delaware by the Independent Order of Good Templars. In 1870, he and his wife were elected grand representatives and attended the Grand Lodge of North America for the session in St. Louis, Missouri, that year. Mr. Jakes filled all the offices in the Grand Lodge of the State, except the chair of the Grand Master.

In 1879, he was elected Grand Representative of the State to the Grand Lodge of the United States, and represented the State for four consecutive years—at Baltimore, Maryland the first year, at Toronto, Canada, in 1880; in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1881; and again in Baltimore in 1882. He was also present at the session held in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1883, and in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1884, he was appointed the Grand Marshal by the Grand Sire-elect, the Honorable Judge Garey, of Baltimore, Maryland. At the next annual session in Baltimore, he served in his official capacity at the corner stone laying and unveiling of the Ridgely Monument in 1885. He filled his place in 1886; and in Denver, Colorado, in 1887.

In 1878, he was made a life director of the American Bible Society.

At the election of President Hayes, the family represented three generations—his father, himself, and two sons, all voting.

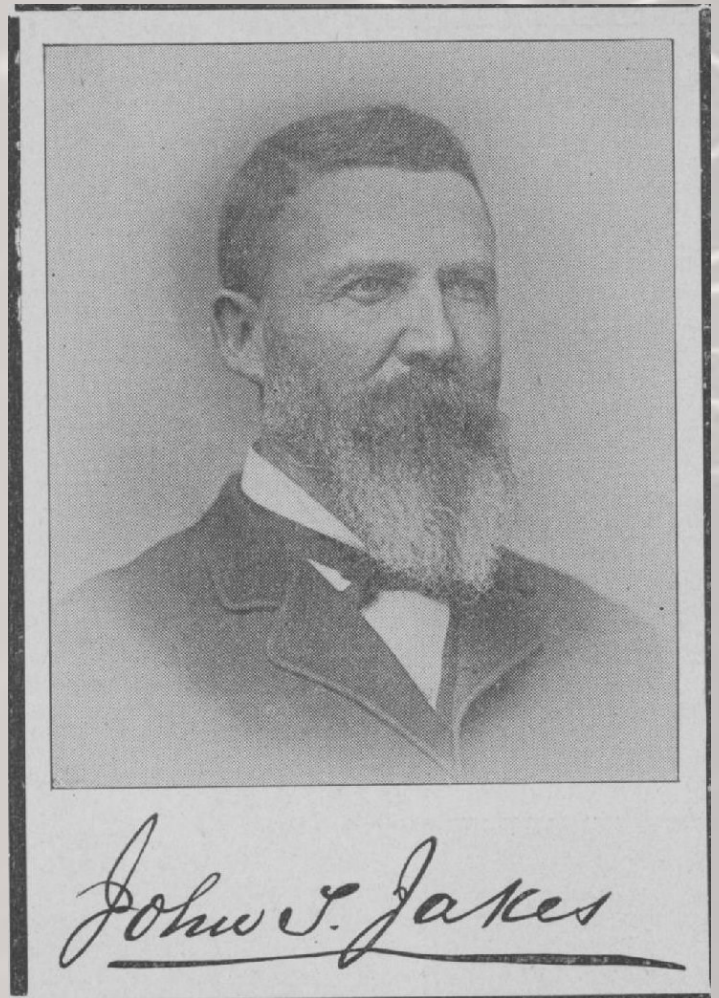
He was married the 14th day of February, 1864, to Mary B. Townsend, daughter of Benjamin B. Townsend of Camden, Delaware.

In 1865, Mr. Jakes started a subscription list for the purpose of putting up a temporary building to be used as a Sunday school. From the monies collected, a “plank church” was built, but before its dedication the Rev. Mr. Hammersley of Camden Circuit organized the Board of Trustees to receive the edifice in the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Upon the perfecting of this Board of Trustees, they issued the following notice:

**Taken from a 1912 church program when the church structure was moved to its Broad Street location

This M. E. plank church of West Camden, located at Camden Station, will be dedicated to the worship of almighty God on Sunday the 12th, by Rev. Andrew Manship of Philadelphia; Rev. J. J. Pearce, late of Wyoming Conference; Rev. Colelazer, of Philadelphia Conference. Rev. A. D. Davis, of Erie Conference, will officiate. Services commence at 10 o'clock a.m., and continue at 3 and 7 o'clock p.m. All are invited to attend.

By the Pastor and Trustees
November 3, 1865"



The Founder of Wyoming Methodist
Episcopal Church, November 1965

The Plank Church answered all purposes for the people of Wyoming, until it became necessary to build a new church. This was done in 1883, and the new church was dedicated in September of the same year. In 1885, the parsonage was built.**

***From Scharf's History of Delaware, 1609-1888, by J. Thomas Scharf*

Historical Information

Taken from a dedication program of 1912

Seventy years ago our now well-known town of Wyoming was known as West Camden. There were only three houses, a grist mill, and a saw mill here. The motive power for both these mills was the waters of our beautiful Wyoming Lake, known to the plain folk of those times as the millpond, and previously known as Isaac Creek.

In the year 1855, after several surveys, the Delaware Railroad was located as it now is, and in the following year (1856) the trains were run over this part of the road. It was of great interest to the people then, many of whom had never seen a railroad or railroad train. The farmers soon learned and availed themselves of the advantages of railroad transportation, and the great fruit industry of Delaware, especially of this section, dates its beginning from the building of the railroad.

The town of Wyoming also dates its beginning from the building of the railroad, but it grew slowly until the year 1865, when immigrants from other states - attracted by the cheap fruit lands and the mild winters of Delaware - began to come and make themselves homes which, together with the returning soldiers, materially increased the population, and especially accelerated the growth of Wyoming. The greatly improved conditions of those times came to the farmers, who began fully to realize generous incomes from the sale of the luscious Delaware peach, which began coming to market in large quantities. As Wyoming was from the

beginning, so she is today, one of the best fruit markets on the Delaware Railroad. She grew from that date, 1865, until she is now one of the most important and one of the most attractive towns along the Delaware Railroad. It may be well to recall that our town was named for the beautiful Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, which calls to mind Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming."

It was during the busy peach season of 1865 that the building of a church for our town was suggested, and we believe that a peach buyer from New York, a Mr. T. E. Feree, either made the suggestion or promptly seconded it, but the much larger share of the credit for the building of the "Plank Church" is due Mr. John T. Jakes, at that time one of our leading citizens and a very progressive man.

The building was plain, the walls being of plank set upon end, and it was located on Mr. Jakes' property near the lake on Water Street. It was built and, we think, also dedicated in the early part of 1866. The dedicatory sermon was preached by the Rev. Andrew Manship, whose fame had spread over this Maryland and Delaware Peninsula and beyond; and whose name was a household word in hundreds of Methodist families.

The names of the first trustees of and the larger contributors to the old "Plank Church" were:

John T. Jakes (President, Board of Trustees), Thomas Jackson (Treasurer), Thomas Downham (Secretary), John Leager, Samuel Conner (President), William B. Wheatley, William C. Longfellow, William A. Lewis, George M. Crossman, Baynard Wheatley, Pete Smith, William P. Lindale, John Collins, William McGonigal, and

Pitner Ramsdale; and there were others whose names we cannot recall.

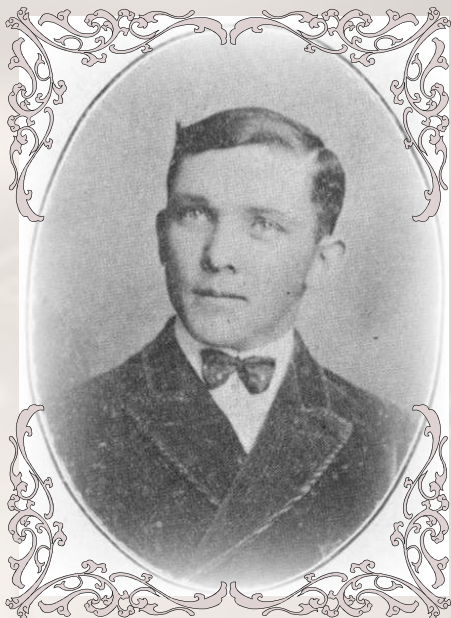
The first pastors of the new congregation were the Rev. John J. Pearce, as senior, and the Rev. Andrew D. Davis, as junior preacher. The charge was known as the Willow Grove Circuit (1866).

By March 1868, only two years after the building of the "Plank Church," the membership had grown from about a dozen persons to nearly one hundred, and there was a full general congregation. The population of the town at that time was about two hundred. The growth in membership was brought about largely through the labors of Rev. Andrew D. Davis, who was afterward widely known as a successful revivalist. He was a pious and a Godly man. During the three months prior to March 1868, and largely as a result of his labors, he received 130 persons on probation (on the circuit). By this time, the Sunday school of the "Old Plank Church," under the direction of Mr. John T. Jakes, Superintendent, had a membership of 140, with an average attendance of about one hundred, and during the past year had raised for missions \$45.75, and about \$15.00 in premiums were awarded the children for recitations, attendance, etc.

One curious fact at this time was that the children during the past year had recited 34,150 verses of Scripture. The congregation and the Sunday school had plenty of excellent music, both vocal and instrumental. The organist was the celebrated Prof. John Brown, the blind musician, and in the choir were the Carey brothers, trained

singers and musicians, and others. The children were trained to sing, and musical entertainments were given. We want to say a word on Professor Brown who, though blind, was a remarkable man; intelligent, an excellent teacher of music, a splendid pianist, and who had a most tenacious memory, especially for music. As we write, we have pleasant memories of the "Old Plank Church," and of the many friends we used to meet there, almost all of whom have gone over to the "silent majority."

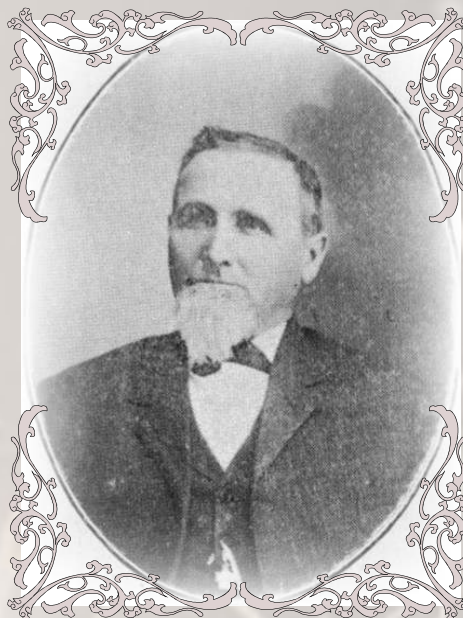
The Rev. Andrew D. Davis was followed in the pastorate of the "Old Plank Church, Willow Grove Circuit, by J. B. Mann, 1869; J. L. Tompkinson, 1869-1870; George S. Conaway, 1871-1872; Joseph Dare, 1873-1874; D. W. McIntire, 1875-1877; W. W. Redman, 1878; A. W. Lightbourn, 1879; Sewell Pilchard, 1880-1881; A. T. Melvin, 1882-1883; William M. Warner, 1884-1886; William M. Green, 1887.



Wilmer K. Benson
*Sunday School Superintendent,
 Board of Trustees
 1912*

In the year 1882, the church building (now at the Broad Street location) was begun. The foundation was completed, and the cornerstone laid and then, through some misunderstanding or for some reason, the work was discontinued until the next year, 1883, when the church was completed. George M. Fisher, William R. Garton, and Caleb Jackson borrowing money to the amount of about \$2,500, making themselves personally responsible for the payment, brought about its final completion. With the aid of this money, the church was completed. Part of the lumber was bought of John Hunn, Wyoming, and part of Hazel & Pennewill, Dover. A great deal of the framing was hauled from the woods. Mr. W. H. Ridgeway (photo on the right), now of Dover, Del., went into his woods and cut and hauled the framing and sills, and gave the work a new start.

The church was dedicated in 1883. The morning sermon was preached



J. H. Berry
*President Board of Trustees
 Whose faithful service in the present
 enterprise has indelibly stamped the
 memories of all who know him.
 1912*



W. H. Ridgeway
*(Dover, Delaware), who went in his woods
 and cut the timber and hauled it for the
 church of 1883.*

by Rev. A. H. Lightbourn, the afternoon sermon by Rev. J. H. Caldwell, and the evening sermon by Rev. J. S. Willis. Other pastors were J. E. Kidney, 1888; George A. Sheets, 1889-90; Aloysius Green, 1891; W. B. Gregg, 1892 (Brother Gregg failed in health in 1892, and died January 24, 1893, George W. Bowman, 1893; T. C. Smoot, 1894-95; J. E. Graham, 1896-97-98-99-1900; G. P. Smith, 1901-02-03-04-05; J. F. Anderson, 1906-07; D. F. McFaul, 1908-09; Leolan Jackson, 1910-11; H. C. Shipley, 1912.

The names of the trustees at this date (1912) are: John H. Berry (see photo left), I. R. Jackson (see photo next page), John Legar, J. L. Bradley, George Mason, J. H. Hudson, Wilmer K. Benson (see photo left), R. K. Caulk, H. J. Baker. So we find that not one of the trustees of the old "Plank Church" remains on the Board of Trustees today.

They served their day faithfully and are "gone over." And of all those worshiped in the old "Plank Church" in its first year, 1866, save the writer and five or six others alone remain.



I. R. Jackson
Treasurer, Board of Trustees
1912

Mrs. I. R. Jackson
President of our Ladies'
Energetic Aid Society;
also President Calendar Club to whom
much credit is due for the progress of the
present church enterprise (1912)

*The following information has
been collated by
Mr. Thomas Irons, Camden, Delaware*

July 15-23, 1912, marks another epoch in the history of our church. Beginning with this date the church and parsonage were removed from the low center of the large lot nearly a "block" square, to the corner and line of one of the most desirable streets in the Town of Wyoming. A large Sunday school room has been added to the church proper, separated by rolling partitions, and a magnificent new tower entrance and belfry give the entire building the appearance of a new structure throughout. The church is raised an attractive distance from the ground level, resting on a beautiful concrete-block foundation, and partly surrounded with cement walks. A capacious basement, with concrete walls and floors, entered either from the church or street, is a pleasing feature. The parsonage has been completely renewed inside and improved by the addition of a large porch; is located also on the street line beside the church. An energetic Board of Trustees, a Ladies Modern Aid Society, and a live, working Sunday

school have labored together unceasingly for both church and parsonage properties.

The concrete work was done by H. C. Turner, and the carpenter work by J. Howard Nichols, both of Federalsburg, Maryland.

The beautiful interior decorations were executed under the supervision of C. H. Atkins, of Viola, Del. The furniture and floor coverings are also new. Handsome, heavy, circular pews complete one of the best churches (comparatively) in the Conference. The work and material, in accord with the plans of the architect, C. C. Buck, of Camden, Del., cost about \$3,100. Furniture, organ, extras, and outside work make the total about \$4,000. ...



Wyoming Methodist Church

1912

WYOMING, DEL.

H. C. SHIPLEY, PASTOR

Remodeling of the Broad Street Church

Information gleaned from the booklets for the reopening services of December 29, 1912, and December 13, 1953, and old church directories

1931—In 1931 the church was remodeled, with the ceiling lowered, hardwood floor laid, and the first memorial window installed. The Sunday school room, as well as the church proper, was then redecorated.

1933—In 1933 a new carpet was laid in the church.

1945-1948—Between 1945 and 1948, other improvements were made. The Communion Table was purchased. Fiberboard walls and ceilings were put in the opening between the church and the Sunday school rooms, with Fiberglass for soundproofing placed between the roll doors and the new partition wall. At this time, the whole building was redecorated within and without.

1949—In February of 1949, a Hammond Electric Organ was purchased. Chimes were added the following year.

1953—In 1953, a program of improvements was started by the bequest of Elwood Jenkins, which amounted to \$21,124.87. With this amount on hand, the church put on a subscription drive in which pledges were made to the extent of \$21,663.53, to be paid in three years. These two amounts made a total of \$42,788.40. The groundbreaking service was held on Sunday, March 15, 1953, with the work being started the following week.

This work included four department rooms for Sunday school, a room to be used by the choir and as the pastor's study, a kitchen, two new restrooms, and a new roof on the old building. In the sanctuary, the chancel was divided, the altar was placed in the newly made inset, and the dossal was hung. The organ was moved to the platform behind the pulpit, and the choir now faced the organ. The partition and rolling doors between the sanctuary and the Sunday school room were replaced by modern folding

doors in order to accommodate larger congregations on special days. A hardwood floor was laid in the old Sunday school room. The entire interior was repainted. All of these things, including carpet, furniture, and other needed equipment, cost about \$46,000.

Building Committee authorized. In the spring of 1963, the interior of the sanctuary and the adjoining room were painted. The Friendship Bible Class provided for this, at a cost of \$1,200.

1964—In February 1964, a Crusade for building funds was held, with a goal of \$90,000 set, and over

Now And Then



Staff photo/Linda Laird

The facade of the Wyoming Methodist Church and Parsonage has changed a bit from 1907, but is still recognizable today.

From the 'Delaware State News' on July 14, 1999

1963—During 1963, steps were taken to provide additional facilities for Christian education and fellowship, and for a different parsonage. The general plans were approved and a

\$102,000 pledged for a three-year period. R. Calvin Clendaniel of Lincoln, Delaware, was hired as architect. Construction work began in the summer of 1964 (by the Field

Construction Company of Wyoming, Delaware). During this same time, the house known as the Draper Home, on 112 Pine Street, was purchased for a parsonage while construction began on the Education Building, which included four dividable classrooms, additional restrooms, new kitchen, fellowship hall, lounge, and pastor's study.

1979-1981—Between 1979 and 1981 several steps were taken to conserve energy. With fuel costs rising rapidly in this period, the decision was made to insulate and protect the stained glass windows with a Lexan covering and place storm windows throughout the building. A new front door for the sanctuary was added and two gas furnaces were placed in fellowship hall to improve and cut costs of heating.

1989—In 1989 the Marjorie Papen Voshell Memorial Chapel was built in the church annex, providing an intimate setting for small weddings, meetings, and prayer groups. The soundproof room also served as a "crying room" for infants during the worship service. During this period the church also leased the "Knight House" to use as classrooms to alleviate the "space crunch" in the church and to allow for the creation of additional classes.

1992-1993—During the years of 1992-1993, there was much talk of adding on to the existing building and improving the present structure. Plans were drawn up May 5, 1993. Nothing further was officially done.

1999—On December 5, 1999, a vote was taken to build a new building, or do reconstruction work on the present structure. The vote was in favor of doing one thing or the other. Action was taken to form a building committee that would be directly responsible to the Administrative Council. The Building Committee promptly decided to compare costs and possibilities of building a new structure or reconstructing the present building and adding on. After much discussion, disagreement, etc., it was decided to put it to a church vote.

2000—On September 10, 2000, at 2:30 p.m., the church voted, by a large majority, in favor of erecting a new building. The building committee was left in place, and their first duty was to find a large enough piece of ground on which to build a new church. The first choice was a piece of land located on Almshouse Road. Before this choice could be voted on, the Papen Family generously offered a 20 acre piece of ground close to Wyoming.

2001—On May 16, 2001, the church voted to accept the Papen Family's offer of ground on which to build a new church.

2007—On September 9, 2007, we celebrated the groundbreaking at the new church location, 216 Wyoming Mill Road, Dover.

2009—On July 12, 2009, we celebrated a service of thanksgiving and farewell at the church location at 107 Broad Street in Wyoming. On November 8, 2009, the new church building on Wyoming Mill Road was consecrated. The Rev. Dr. Peggy Johnson, Bishop of the Eastern Philadelphia Conference of the United Methodist Church officiated the celebration service. On November 15, 2009, the new Renaissance Quantum Allen Organ was dedicated.

The very spacious new church is all around handicap accessible. The Sanctuary has a seating capacity of 640, including about 20 spaces for wheelchairs and other mobility devices throughout the pew area. The stained glass windows from the Broad Street location were incorporated all around the new Sanctuary. Lighting from the rear of their encasement brings out their exquisite design and the colors of the glass in a new and glorious way. The golden cross from the Broad Street location was mounted on a larger red wooden cross and an even larger oak cross underneath that, and that three-layered cross is suspended in front of the organ sound wall high above the altar. Long-time church and choir member James H.

Roscoe created that new cross.

Six of the stained-glass windows were incorporated around the generous narthex which also features a welcome area with reception desk, a coat room and plenty of space for advertising and promoting current events and ministries. The original door of the Marjorie Papen Memorial Chapel of the Broad Street location leads into a Memorial Room next to the welcome desk. Many more items that were used in the church at the Broad Street location are on permanent display in the Memorial Room.

The north wing of the building houses 15 classrooms, the Pastor's office and three administrative offices, a choir room and bell choir room, a library and spacious nursery with separate rooms for infants and toddlers, and an open-floor attic over the entire space.

The church's south wing is dedicated to fellowship. A great variety of events, church and family, are held in the Family Life Center. Catering is done by the church's Extended Table Team in the commercial grade kitchen, while a smaller kitchen may be used for private parties and smaller group events.

A separate food pantry is located at the far south end of the church.

Church members and friends helped with major portions of the hands-on building of the present church. Plans are copious for a further development of the roughly nineteen acres of church grounds, including a gymnasium, sports field, playground, meditation path and memorial garden to name but a few.

We give God the glory as existing ministries are thriving and new ministries keep evolving in this vibrant church that has been ...

**...at the heart of it all -
for 150 years!**



Pastors Who have Served Wyoming United Methodist Church

1865—The Rev. John G. Pierce,
Senior Pastor, with
The Rev. Andrew D. Davis as Junior Pastor

1867-1868—The Rev. Andrew D. Davis,
Senior Pastor, with
The Rev. J. Downham as Junior Pastor

1869—The Rev. J. B. Mann

1869-1870—The Rev. J. L. Tomkinson

1871-1872—The Rev. George S. Conaway

1873-1874—The Rev. Joseph Dare

1875-1877—The Rev. D. W. McIntire

1878—The Rev. W. W. Redman

1879—The Rev. A. W. Lightbourn

1880-1881—The Rev. Sewell Pilchard

1882-1883—The Rev. A. T. Melvin

1884-1886—The Rev. William W. Warner

1887—The Rev. W. M. Green

1888—The Rev. J. E. Kidney

1889-1890—The Rev. George A. Sheets

1891—The Rev. Aloysius Green

1892—The Rev. W. B. Gregg

1893—The Rev. George W. Bowman

1894-1895—The Rev. T. C. Smoot

1896-1900—The Rev. J. E. Graham

1901-1905—The Rev. G. P. Smith

1906-1907—The Rev. J. F. Anderson

1908-1909—The Rev. D. F. McFaul

1910-1911—The Rev. Leolan Jackson

1912—The Rev. H. C. Shipley

1925—The Rev. Hudson

1925-1929—The Rev. Daniel Ford

1929-1931—The Rev. J. S. Potts

1931-1936—The Rev. Douglas Milbury

1936-1939—The Rev. Waldo L. Dize

1939-1944—The Rev. Otis B. Reed

1944-1947—The Rev. William O. Hackett

1948-1950—The Rev. Frank Baynard

1950-1956—The Rev. James J. VonHagel

1956-1963—The Rev. Albert A. B. Snapp

1963-1966—The Rev. Everett C. Isaacs

1966-1972—The Rev. Dale R. Pruett

1972-1973—The Rev. Paul E. Reynolds

1973-1979—The Rev. John T. Randolph

1979-1989—The Rev. Robert W. Starrett

1989-1995—The Rev. James J. Riley

1995 (3 mos.)—The Rev. Dale R. Pruett

1995-1997—The Rev. Michael Russell

1997-2006—The Rev. Frank Sutton,
Senior Pastor, with

2002-2006—The Rev. Curtis Dotson
as Associate Pastor

since July **2006**—The Rev. Patti Collett,
Senior Pastor with

2009-2011—The Rev. James Dorton,
Associate Pastor and

Since August **2014**—The Rev. David Hill,
Pastor of Contemporary Worship

