
Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

Anniversaries and Other Events

Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, October 2021

Anniversaries

100th Anniversary, 1971, Rev. Dean E. Benedict

The front page of **The Winchester Star**, April 22, 1971, headlined the marking of Crawford's centennial anniversary. "On Thursday evening April 15, a homecoming banquet gathered present and former members and friends of the church for a gala celebration in Gifford Hall. Each 50-year member present was given a corsage or a boutonniere by the Women's Society of Christian Service." The earliest was George French who joined in 1905 (66 years) and the latest was Vincent Clarke who joined in 1921 (50 years). Olive (Sellers) Wilkins joined in 1919, though she had been a member of the Methodist Church for at least 52 years, part of that was in a Methodist Church in Maine.

Following the banquet dinner of catered roast beef, Gloria Maifield, music director, led attendees in the singing of old hymns. Gloria also sang "How Beautiful Upon the Mountain," accompanied by Julie Collins, the church's organist. Greetings from the Winchester Ecumenical Association were brought by Rev. Henry A. Marquardt of St. Eulalia Church. Harry Emmons, lay leader, spoke about Crawford's contributions to the community. Rev. Benedict gave special recognition to Eunice Chase who was a "faithful and efficient secretary to three pastors" and gave her a certificate of appreciation. Rev. George A. Butters (1935-1938) gave the main address and Rev. H. Newton Clay (1958-1968) gave the benediction. Former ministers and Bishop James K. Mathews preached on Sundays in the spring.

The Winchester Star reported that the climax to the evening was the choir's rendition of the 100-year-old hymn, The Battle Hymn of the Republic followed by a moment of silence.

125th Anniversary 1996, Rev. Lloyd E. Chorpensing

"Crawford Revue" was held Saturday April 28, 1996, under the direction of Martha Peabody, program director and Helena Veranian, pianist. There was a wide variety of performances, including Ben Scharf on drums and Mary White-Scharf on piano doing Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," Katherine Bishop did an Irish jig, Linda and Colin Simson sang "All I Ask of You" from Phantom of the Opera, the Vogelzang family (mother Alexa and daughters Anna and Rachel) sang Don Besig's "Flying Free," and everyone sang "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Home on the Range."



Winchester Star, April 22, 1971



Crawford's 125th Anniversary Banquet, held in Gifford Hall, April 28, 1996.

The anniversary banquet was held the evening of Sunday April 28th in Gifford Hall. Chris Rogers gave a brief history of the church followed by the invocation by Hope Oliver. Dessert was topped off with reflections by Harry Emmons and Eunice Chase. Doris Emmons read comments from long-time past members who could not be present. One was from Mary Seaton Dix who came in the 1930s along with half a dozen other families who became fast friends and continued to keep in touch.



David Dettinger wrote and directed a reenactment of a 1906 Quarterly Conference meeting that brought much laughter. The evening ended with music from the choir.

Fairs, Plays and Special Events

In 1938 there was a **Festival of Holidays** held December 1-3. A news item in the Winchester Star said to come buy Christmas gifts from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. A smorgasbord supper for 50¢ would be served, followed by a moving picture. “Muriel Stafford will tell your character by your handwriting from 4 to 7.” Fifty cents for a meal of all-you-can-eat plus a movie sounds like a bargain, but the country was just coming out of the Great Depression and households were not flush with cash.

The November 10, 1939 edition of The Winchester Star announced the church’s annual bazaar as a **Fall Festival** to be held on Friday the 17th. Morning coffee, a luncheon, afternoon tea and a turkey supper are “offering to the interested shopper an opportunity to relax and enjoy the friendly atmosphere which prevails.” Featured were candy, food, gifts, grabs, household items, handkerchiefs, and white elephants.

Christmas Gift Lane was held on Friday November 16, 1945. It was a fair with a household table, sweater bar, a table with dress-up and practical aprons, toys for children and candy for all ages, and a white elephant section with “attic treasures.” Plants and candles were featured, as was a popular food table. Luncheon was provided for the workers, though at 6:30 a delicious supper was open to the public. (The Winchester Star November 2, 1945)

The Winchester Star of November 16, 1956, in a description of the **Candy Cane Fair** said, “The Methodists in gala attire will welcome you Wednesday and Thursday.” Wednesday the 28th dessert and a preview began at 7:00 p.m. The doors opened on Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. There were “intriguing” Christmas decorations, a Linen Chest Grandmother’s Corner, Home & Garden table, food and candy table, ceramics, and aprons “party and practical” were still in vogue. Luncheon was served from 11:30 to 1:00 and in the afternoon there was a Children’s Carnival featuring games of skill. The fair brought in \$2,200. The previous year’s fair, “**Cracker Barrel Country Fair**” brought in \$1,500 while the 1961 fair \$2,000.

By 1962 the holiday fair had moved up to early November. The **Holiday Accents Fair** began Thursday November 1st with dessert of homemade pies and coffee at 50¢ starting at 6:30. The next day’s lunch was Newburg seafood served by the Center Group [one of the ladies’ circles] known “as the best cooks in the church. Don’t miss this treat!!! Price: \$1.25.” The typewritten flyer was a long list that included tables and the ladies in charge: aprons (they hadn’t gone out of style yet), knitted goods, baked goods, candy, jewelry, holiday centerpiece decorations, stocking stuffers, and gifts/treasures for the home. The dining room and cleanup committee was the Aldersgate Circle and most likely included the male membership of the church. All the married women’s names were their husband’s names, e.g. Mrs. Raymond Chase (rather than Eunice), Mrs. Alan Ross (rather than Joan), Mrs. Richard Bunzel (rather than Mae), Mrs. Donald Wilkins (rather than Olive), etc.

Special events in the late 1800s were centered on all-important fund raising that was organized and carried out by the women’s societies. The July Chronicle is devoted to what the ladies accomplished in a wide range of events.

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of our country’s founding, Crawford’s service on November 21, 1976, was similar to one that would have taken place in 1776. Two Boston TV stations were there to film the service for the evening news. Rev. Leon Hatch, Jr. adapted his sermon from an actual colonial sermon delivered two hundred years ago in New England. However, it was much shorter, which caused him to be admonished because he did not provide “full service for monies rendered.” Hatch was contrite and vowed to preach four hours the next Sabbath. The tithing man used a long pole with a feather attached to rouse anyone seen dozing in the pew. Since there were no musical instruments in colonial times, hymns were led by a “liner” - David Dettinger, who sang a line that was then repeated by the

congregation. The young people gathered contributions of food in baskets that they later delivered to the needy. This service was researched, written and directed by member Eloise Kadesch, who had a background in theater, TV and radio. Throughout her membership, she was instrumental in staging plays at the church calling upon members and the pastor and his family to act parts.

One memorable musicale took place May 1980 called “**We’ve Got Us**” when members weren’t shy about making fun of themselves. Members also performed **Swan Lake**, with Don Ponikvar as Rudolph Nureyev, Sue DiMarzo as Margot Fonteyn and the chorus line of snowflakes included Rev. David Purdy, David Dettinger, Bill Farrar, and Carl Turnquist. **The Dolly Pardon Us Sisters** sang “I’m leaving it all up to you, a hit song of the 1960s. On the serious side, the Middleboro Methodist Bell Choir performed several selections. It is likely that this inspired Crawford to begin a bell choir.

Rummage sales took place for many years, in both fall and spring. The 1956 rummage sales contributed \$139 and the 1957 sales was \$177. The sale of two cookbooks at this time brought in \$427.

Staging plays was a frequent form of entertainment in the 1940s. There were annual “pop” concerts sung by the church’s choral society that were sponsored by the Woman’s Society of Christian Service. In the 1980s the children’s choir performed at the morning service “100% Chance of Rain” under the direction of Gloria Maifeld, director of music. On June 23-24, 1983 Diane Moore, ministerial student and leader of the youth group, directed them in **Godspell**, performed with live music. The indefatigable Ms. Moore, during the same month led twenty-three church school students ranging in ages from 4 to 12, along with the folk choir of adults and teens, in **Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo** at a Sunday morning service.



Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo
Winchester Star, June 16, 1983

The Sunday school students from the youngest to the oldest, with the assistance of their teachers spent Sunday mornings from late April through June 3, 2007 recreating **John Wesley’s Village** in the 18th Century in Gifford Hall. Laura Myers, Ann Jampel and Maryanne Samson did a tremendous job in researching and directing this unusual, engaging historical program. Erica Munoz led the children in singing a Charles Wesley hymn and there were craft activities designed for all age groups. Middle school students built a jail cell. Parishioners who had committed offenses were brought into the cell and had to pay with a donation to a charitable cause in order to be released.



John Wesley’s Village, thoughtfully recreated in Gifford Hall, Spring 2007

The Hanging of the Greens that decorate the sanctuary and exterior doors every November became a tradition starting in 1973. The Sunday School stage a reenactment of Christ's birth at a special family service every year. December 23 and 24, 1965 there was a living crèche on the Church Street lawn performed by the high school students in Methodist Youth Fellowship, who also made the costumes, the shed, crib and lighting. The students took turns as the participants so they wouldn't get too cold. The Winchester Star said the "crèche, an innovation in the town, drew the attention and plaudits of many non-Methodist townsfolk."



Breakfasts served at the church go back to at least 1941 when on Thursday May 1st from 6 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. town residents were invited to partake. Tickets were 35¢ and you could choose juice, cereals, eggs cooked to order, hash and donuts. In more recent times, the youth groups, guided by their advisors, put on full-course breakfasts Sunday mornings.

There was a "**Bad Art Night**" held in 2010 that tested the artistic talent of those who were artistically challenged. Everyone's work was on display at the end and the variety of art produced from the hodgepodge of material supplied was noteworthy.



"Bad Art Night" in 2010 was fun for all.

There have been many activities that have taken place over the church's 150 years, some at the church and some outside its walls. The preceding activities were just a few from our past. Not included but still meaningful are ones like the trips to aid the needy in Haiti, Maine and other places and retreats of many kinds. Then there are the recurring ones of outreach like Thanksgiving baskets, coats and socks to homeless, filling backpacks for children in the fall and Christmas stockings in December, food pantry, meals cooked and served at Dwelling Place and participation in New England Justice For Our Neighbors. We have served and continue to serve.



2008 Friendship Tea, hosted by Crawford's Women's Group

