

# Celebrating God's Faithfulness



October 15, 2023  
150th Anniversary  
Celebration of the  
Clay Center United Methodist Church  
Clay Center, Kansas

*Clay Center United Methodist Church invites you to our*

# *150th Celebration & Bell Tower Dedication*

*Sunday, October 15, 2023*

## Order of Events

The Way Service 8:45–9:30 am (Sanctuary)

Reception to greet friends 9:30–10:30 am (Church Parlor)

Dedication of the Bell 9:40 am (Church Lawn)

Worship Service 10:30–11:30 am (Sanctuary)

Catered Dinner 11:30 am (Family Life Center)

*Please RSVP the number of adults and children (under age 12)  
for Dinner Reservations at:*

*785-632-3106 or [churchoffice@claycenterumc.org](mailto:churchoffice@claycenterumc.org)*



Fall 2023  
in the  
Sanctuary  
with 2  
prayer quilts

## *Celebrating God's Faithfulness*

**1861**- U. S. Grant was President, P. T. Barnum started the Greatest Show on Earth, Levi Strauss was awarded a patent for the copper rivets in his denim pants, and Kansas became a state. Five years later, Clay County was founded with Clay Center becoming the county seat.

In the years following the Civil War, Clay Center experienced a boom. Settlers from the east and overseas poured into the area. They came individually and in groups: German, English, French, and the Scandinavian countries. The Dexter brothers, Alonzo R. and John had selected a site in 1862 for what became Clay Center. There were a few houses, (many of log and dirt) some businesses, dirt roads and no sidewalks. Those people, our ancestors, were a small, but strong community who began building their homes, working the land, and establishing businesses. Even more importantly, they had the deep roots of a religious background. Among those early merchants were such names as Dexter, Higinbotham, Gollober and Kuhnle.

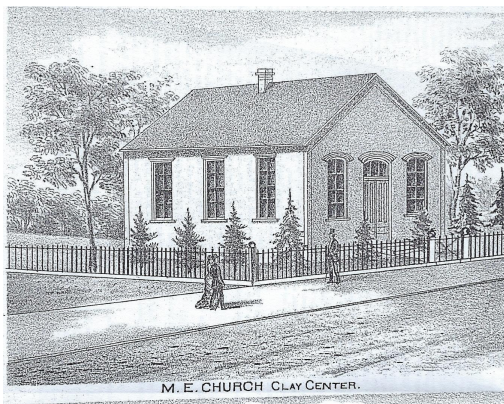
In early days preachers passing through or visiting in the new country preached the gospel to the Methodist settlers. The first organized in the county was organized on Mall Creek. Moses Younkin and J. H. Simpson are listed as the early supporters. Preaching was held at the Simpson home for about three years until the Gatesville school house was built. Clay County was part of the Fort Riley circuit. Probably the second of the western preaching places was Peach Creek, just across the line in Washington County. Next was held at the Sherman school house in Clay County. Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Chester, Mr. and Mrs. George Seabury, W. H. Broughton and George Funnell were among the early members assisting in organizing. Early preachers in this part of the state were Rev. J. P. Ryan, Rev. Thomas Sherwood, Rev. George Wigg, Rev. William Knipe, Rev. R. P. West, Rev. John Butler and Rev. Washington Marlatt. Marlatt was one of the three founders and the first principal of Bluemont Central College at Manhattan, which was subsequently developed into the Kansas State Agricultural College, today known as Kansas State University. William Rundle, a Wesleyan Methodist local preacher, was Sunday school superintendent in the log school house. These early church organizers were men who had the spirit of sacrifice. They

believed the doctrines of the church and were not afraid to let all men know where they stood on the great moral questions. We are indebted to them as builders, foundation layers—men who feared God and wrought righteousness.

From the earliest times, they met in homes to hold their church services and teach their children. They knew the need to build a place which could be a visible structure—a place set aside for church. And so, they joined together—Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Catholic, to build the first Church of Clay Center. In 1870 or 1871, services were held in the log school house, located near the southeast corner of the block on which Garfield School is now located. The mud roof of the schoolhouse was too low to stand upright anywhere except in the center. The different faiths alternated Sundays, all grades taught during the school week, and special community events as they came along.

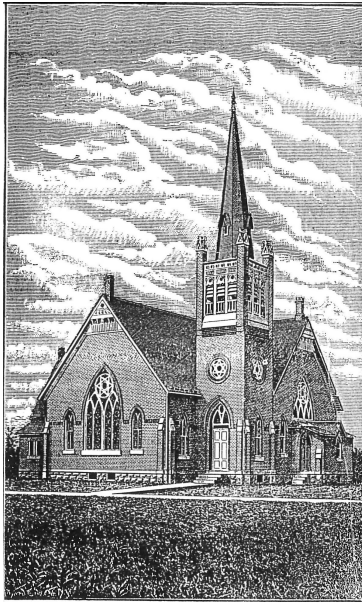
**1873** - The Clay Center Methodist Episcopal Church was recognized by the Kansas Conference in March 1873. Bishop Bowman was the presiding Bishop and Rev. G. S. Dearborn was the presiding elder. The Kansas Conference appointed Rev. W. J. Finley to the Clay Center church. Rev. Finley with the help of the brethren secured three lots and circulated a subscription to build a parsonage. It was located on lots 18, 19, and 20, of block 9. This was the first real estate property owned by the Clay Center M. E. Church. A fire broke out in town and Rev. Finley helped to save the burning building. The fire permanently disabled him, dying in 1874.

During the next two decades Clay Center and Clay County experienced tremendous growth. These years also witnessed the natural catastrophes that would become legend: grasshopper invasions (1874) and blizzards (1887) were benchmarks along with floods, drouth and tornadoes.



Under the pastorate of Rev. W. H. Underwood, the church people selected the site of our present church here at 5th and Clarke. A good-sized frame church was built in 1876. Subscriptions of fifty cents to one dollar were taken up for the construction. Later this church was moved across the

alley to the north west corner of 5th and Dexter (905 5th Street), which is currently the parking lot of the Kiers Thriftway. Services were held here until the new building was completed at the south west corner of 5th and Clarke Streets (921 5th Street); this has been "Home" to our church family ever since.



FIRST M. E. CHURCH.

**1883** - According to *The Clay Center Times* files, the cornerstone for the original Methodist church was laid in September 1883, and construction was in progress until March 1885. The building committee was Hiram H. Bloss, J. S. Sterling, Henry H. Taylor, John S. Brown, John W. Kennedy, Matthew M. Miller, J. F. Ryerson and William Sharpe. The dimensions of the building were 90' x 110' with the tower rising 106 feet above the sidewalk. It was built of brick which was manufactured in the Clay Center area and trimmed with white limestone. Dedication ceremonies were held on March 8, 1885. Rev. Dr. Adams of Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Illinois preached the sermon.

Records in our church files note that on "On February 24, 1883, my office, containing all my books, church records, etc. was burned. Hence the present record is imperfectly kept." This is signed J. T. Mayer.

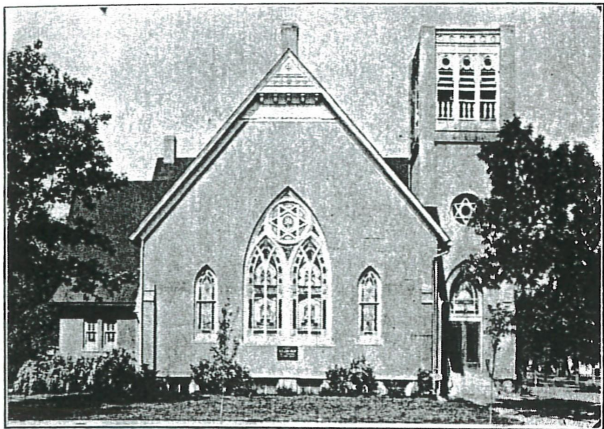
The first trustees were elected and then sworn into office by a Notary Public, just as county and city officers were. This continued until almost 1930. Some certificates are in the trustee books yet, as proof. One trustee meeting, July 30, 1885 lasted four days, due to a \$4.93 mistake. On June 5, 1887, the trustees decided the church was not to be used for anything other than for church meetings. If other meetings were held, they needed the consent of the trustees and pastor. That has since changed greatly over the years.

During that first decade, the congregation grew from a small cluster of families to a circuit membership of eighty-four members with twenty-seven probationers and three local ministers.

**1900** The building has evolved over the years to meet the needs of the congregation. A floor furnace was installed in the sanctuary around 1900 when Mrs. Alfred Held was president of the Ladies Aid Society. This replaced the three coal burning stoves.

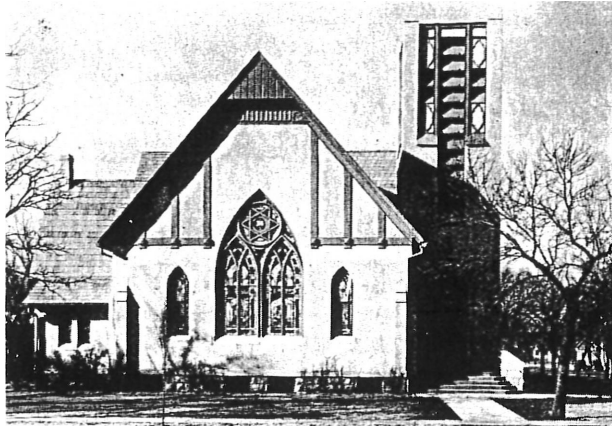
**In 1908** the manually operated pipe organ was installed. The bellows were operated by a water pump, which was later replaced by electric power. Later this organ was replaced by an electronic organ that was dedicated in the 1950's. In 1996, a new Artisan Classic Electronic was purchased which was the first of its kind to be placed in the state of Kansas. It was first used for worship services on June 16, 1996, and was dedicated in October 1996.

**In 1909** a Sunday school section was added. This was done by adding a balcony, which was divided into classrooms. Wooden sliding doors were installed to close off the east end of the sanctuary under the balcony for Sunday school purposes.



**In 1925 or 1926** the building was given a rather extensive face-lift. Kelly Stone (a type of stucco) was put over the brick on the outside of the building to make a more weather-proof surface, as the original brick proved too soft to withstand the weather. At this time, the basement was dug out to the west side of the foundation to make more Sunday school rooms and the thirty-three foot steeple was taken

down, as it was feared it had deteriorated to the point of being unsafe. A large flat stepping stone, approximately four feet square, which was in front of the church along the street and raised high enough to let people step from buggies onto the sidewalk was also removed at this time. A large coal furnace with one large register located in the front of the sanctuary was then added and this was funded by the Ladies Aid Society. Also, a second furnace was added to the southeast corner of the basement, which heated the east part of the building.



**1938** The next major change in the building came in 1938, while Rev. LeRoy Arend was pastor. At this time the building was completely repaired and changed, except for the original walls and floors. A new stucco surface was put on the outside of the building to replace the Kelly Stone. A new slate roof replaced the existing one and a new entrance door was installed at the northeast entrance of

the church. Extensive interior changes were made as well. A new ceiling was installed in the sanctuary with a completely new lighting system. The new light fixtures were given by Mrs. Porter Marshall. The stairway to the basement was relocated and the basement made larger and rearranged completely. New gas-fired furnaces were installed. The sliding doors dividing the sanctuary were replaced by a curtain to make the back part of the sanctuary into a parlor. Some other changes were a new chancel arrangement, funded by Will Schabel. New rugs and pews were arranged to fit the new altar arrangement. The pipe organ was moved from behind the choir to its present location. A Sunday school room to the north side of the sanctuary was taken off and the bottom part of the large window on the north side was installed. For all practical purposes, the church was made to look like a new building at this time. The dedication ceremonies for the renovated First Methodist Episcopal Church were held December 18, 1938, according to the Clay Center Times. The following is taken from the rededication Booklet for that day:

**“To the Pioneer members who through their faith, vision, and heroic efforts have made possible our church;  
to the present members who through their rich heritage, and realization of a need, and sacrifice, have built for the future, this book is dedicated.”**

Charles L. Mead was Bishop and LeRoy F. Arend the pastor. The Board of Trustees were G. C. Adams, J. D. Wood, Dr. F. A. Nelson, J. C. Carson, and E.

H. Tolin. The building committee was Porter Marshall, E. H. Tolin, Will Roth, Mrs. Warren Watts and Mrs. P. L. Garrett.

**1955 - 1956** The next major change came in 1955 and 1956, when the present-day Sunday School addition was built to the south and west sides of the original building. The new annex was built separately from the original structure, although it appears as one unit. In 1950 Rev. Roxie Powell appointed Ernest Larson as chairman to study plans. Gilbert L. Geary, chief architect, Wilson and Company Engineers of Salina, were to draw plans for the new addition. The estimated cost of the building and equipment was \$105,000. Cash and pledges were secured. Bids were let April 21, 1955, and awarded to Carl Hay, local contractor, and a member of the church.

Construction began in September 1955, and was completed one year later. Dedication took place in September 1956, with no indebtedness to the new educational unit. At about this same time new flooring, paneling, ceiling, new kitchen cupboards, dish cart cupboards and dishwasher were installed downstairs of the main building. Two small Sunday School classrooms were removed from the south side of the church. A large stained-glass window on

the south side of the sanctuary was covered over. However, during the most recent renovation, it was uncovered and lighted, and can be seen from the sanctuary.



**1973** -The church was struck by the tornado in September of 1973, causing considerable damage to the roof, windows, and other areas, which were repaired. This

instigated the remodeling of the sanctuary and front section of the church. This took place in 1978- 1979, during the pastorate of Rev. Calvin Hartman. The sanctuary was remodeled, with additional wood paneling designed to match the existing paneling. The ceiling in the sanctuary was reworked at this time, exposing the cross design. The balcony was completely rebuilt, allowing for more seating and a better view of the altar area with the new elevated pews. Also, the new church office, work room, narthex, and entire new main entrance were added. A new carpet was installed throughout the sanctuary and the new addition. It was during Rev. Hartman's years when the first lift was installed in the building.

**1973 - UM Church reaches out:** The September 1973 tornado damaged and/or destroyed many structures, homes, businesses and churches in Clay County. As well as our own church building having damage, two local churches were destroyed. The Clay Center Dispatch (Nov 16, 1973) reported "Fr. Earl Minturn of **St. Paul's Episcopal Church** accepts a \$1,000 check from Rev. Calvin Hartman. The money was donated by the Methodist congregation to the Episcopal congregation for the rebuilding of their church." The Dec. 21, 1973 Clay Center Dispatch reported "**The First Lutheran Church (Swedesburg)**/in northern Clay County) is involved in an option study to determine final plans for the rebuilding of the church which was destroyed in the Sept. 25 tornado. Rev. Clinton L. Donald, pastor, says some definite decisions will be made by the end of the year. The church, one of two in the county wiped out by the tornado, received a \$1,000 gift from the United Methodist Church in Clay Center toward a rebuilding fund."

**2001 - Family Life Center:** The need for expansion had been talked about for quite some time. The space in the Fellowship Hall in the basement was not enough for a gathering place and sports facility. It was still being talked about when Rev. Bob Baer came in 1994. Rev. Baer was instrumental in turning discussion into action. A long range planning committee was set up and a professional group was hired to help organize and raise funds. Besides a gathering place, the idea was to be able to host indoor games such as basketball and volleyball. Notice the high ceilings? The committee consisted of Rev. Bob Baer, Lyndell Barton, Jim Beck, Dwight Benninga-chair, Cherie Birkbeck, Kent Griggs, Alan Johnson, Ross Knitter, L'Jeane Mugler, Gale Nebelung-secretary, and Gail Thomas-vice chair. It was seen by some as a want rather than a need. The committee decided that the building be given a name to add credence. The building's purpose was to serve family and their life, making the name an easy choice. The final packet to be voted on included not only building the Family Life Center but also to update the technology in both the sanctuary and the Family Life Center, and to remodel the Fellowship Hall in the basement of the church. The cost for all three projects was approximately \$850,000.00 Approximately half that amount was raised and the church took a loan with the UM Foundation for the remainder. The groundbreaking took place in 2001 and the Family Life Center was added to the west side of the existing building. The building was

completed in January, 2002. The plaque in the Family Life Center narthex reads:

CONSECRATED TO THE GLORY OF GOD  
FOR HIS SERVICE  
BY THE PEOPLE OF THE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
OF CLAY CENTER  
MARCH 17, 2002

On August 19, 2007 was a big day for the Family Life Center. There was an early service, a brunch in the Family Life Center, dedication and a Mortgage Burning Ceremony, ending with the later worship service. The Mortgage Burning was a hallelujah to our congregation, with the final payment made in June, 2007. Our church is surely a giving church as the Family Life Center became debt free after only five and one half years. The kitchen needed to be fully operational so a "kitchen shower" was held to fill it with all the necessities.

Today the Family Life Center has been used for weddings and receptions, family celebrations, funeral dinners, family and class reunions, auctions, fundraisers, Scramble meals, special church events such as Numana, Spring Fling and VBS. There have been community movie nights, and game nights. It also serves as a safe place for the students of Garfield School in an emergency. It has truly been a real blessing for not only our church but for the community. The Fellowship Hall in the basement was remodeled to be used primarily for children's ministry such as VBS, Adventurers, Power Pack and Youth Group.

**Two Sunday Morning Worship Services** first began during the pastorate of Rev. Gene M. Tromble (1979-1984). At that time these two services were identical and both were in the sanctuary. Rev. Larry Myers served our church 2008-2013. He wished to offer a more contemporary service at one of those worship times. Beginning in 2009 the 8:30 service remained the Traditional worship service with the Chancel Choir, song leader, and organ; 9:30 Sunday School; and at 10:30 worship service with the Praise Team. In mid 2010, after much thought and discussion, the first service became the contemporary service with a Praise Team at 9:00 and the second service was designated as the traditional service with the Chancel Choir, song leader, and

organ at 10:45 am with both services in the sanctuary. Rev. Ryan Lynch was appointed to our church in 2013. His vision was to move the contemporary service into the Family Life Center. On July 6, 2014 at 8:45 am "The Way" Praise Service was held in the Family Life Center; followed by Sunday School at 9:30 am; and Worship in the Sanctuary at 10:30 am. This is the current Sunday morning regular schedule.

**Confirmation** is learning more about the Bible, Methodism, and Christianity. The seventh and eighth graders choose an adult mentor from the congregation and have weekly meetings with their mentor, Pastor Reuben Langat, and Zac Vakakewatabua. This is a five to six month program. We are grateful to have dedicated adults to help these students on their Christian walk. A class similar to this is offered to adults who are new to Methodism and wish to join the church.

**Technology:** Calvin Hartman was pastor when the local mission began to share our service with the public. The main idea was to reach members of our congregation who were in a nursing home and or home bound. Al Kirtley started with a camera and tripod set up in the balcony. Al would head up after the service to a tower located Twelfth and Prospect to hook in to the equipment. This was done just like a postal worker, through rain, hail, sleet and snow. Sometime in the mid 1970s a camera and a reel to reel tape recorder was added. The cable company, Cable-Com, would put it on the air for us each Sunday afternoon. Eventually, the tech team here at the church was responsible for the broadcast. Those who made this ministry a reality are Al Kirtley, Jim Beck, Art Benson, Kraig Brockman, Joe Ferguson, Alan Johnson, Bill Kline, Robert Knitter, Wayne Link, Tom Nelson and Jon Schooley. The single camera and reel to reel was replaced with VHS tapes that still needed to be taken to the towers. Eagle Com took over and the church would mail a DVD to their office in Abilene and deliver Twin Valley. Some of these DVDs are in our church library. An update to the cameras in the Family Life Center was done by Ian Byer. We began live-streaming our service in 2017. The church services are in about 250 homes a week. People from Canada, the UK, Republic of Korea, Ireland, Kenya, Fiji and Cambodia have tuned in to worship with us. Rowan Hinkle is our Audio/Video and Communication Tech Leader and is supported by many volunteers of all ages. We have always been a "techy" church and that was a real blessing when COVID hit and we couldn't worship in person.

**North Parking lot-In 2006** the Church Council voted to approve the purchase of the house and property located at 423 Clarke Street to be used for a parking lot. As funds became available, 425 Clarke Street was also purchased. By removing both houses, additional parking spaces were added. Eventually this parking lot was paved and fences were installed on both the east and west sides.

**2007** - The church roof was replaced with a metal roof.

**New piano in sanctuary, February 2008:** Funds were donated for a new piano for the sanctuary. Pat Beach and her son Kenny, Faye Martin and Cathy Hafner spent several days trying out new pianos. They located one they believed would be perfect for our congregation. It is a Yamaha Clavinova electronic piano. The piano that was in the sanctuary is now in the Family Life Center.

**September 28, 2008 - Playground:** Pastor Larry Myers led the Dedication Service for the Playground located on the west side of the Family Life Center. It was several months earlier (during Pastor Glenn Tombaugh's term) that the Pathfinders Sunday School Class had been asked to head up plans and fundraising for this playground project. Estimated cost had been \$40,000 for fencing, ground cover, equipment for toddlers, equipment for 5-12 year olds, and miscellaneous expenses. July 2012 *Enlightener* with photo and caption "Our United Methodist Playground is a busy place! Our church groups use it regularly and it is open for our community to use. Anyone is welcome to come in and play!"

**The Flames** were a very active co-rec adult softball team. They played other church sponsored teams at the Clay County Fairgrounds.

**2010-Stained glass window project** is completed! This was a necessary project to maintain our beautiful windows for future generations. The Willet Hauser Company was used to restore and protect the windows with a protective glass that matches the architect of the windows.

**2011-New windows** -The Education Wing of our church has had all of the windows removed and replaced with modern updated efficient windows.

**2016-Chapel** - In the fall of 2016 our church announced a new quiet room where you can go, close the door and pray to your Father. It is called the "Chapel" and is located in the lower level (accessible by elevator or stairs) just up the hall from the Youth Room. When this room became available Pastor Ryan Lynch mentioned to Bill Crymble his vision of a chapel for quiet prayer, study, and worship by church members. The group effort of Bill, Dana Bergsten and Tom Nelson and past-used church "treasures" found around the church, plus a rugged cross Bill fashioned from a cedar tree, and a communion set Bill created at his potter's wheel, the Chapel became a reality. There you will find an altar with a lighted stained glass window, a rugged cross with prayer rail, a comfortable chair, and pews. In 2023, Pastor Reuben Langat added his idea of having church members write their prayer requests on post-it notes and place them on the cross. He then reads those notes and prays over the requests of each one.

**2021-A basketball court.** In 2015 some money was donated to build a basketball court directly north of the playground (west of Family Life Center). In 2021, with more Memorial funds available, the Trustees worked to make this project become a reality.

**Spring of 2022** Dennis and Linda Parry generously gifted the house and lot at 419 Clarke Street (adjacent to our north parking lot) to the church. The house was removed. Plans for a Community Garden in 2024 are in the works.

**The church has owned six different parsonages.** The first one was at **1101 5th Street**, the present location of Braden Financial Services. The second parsonage located at **639 Clarke** is mentioned as in use until 1896. The third parsonage was located at **321 Huntress** and then in 1930 it was traded for a property at **517 Frederick**. In 1971 the church sold the 517 Frederick parsonage to Wayne Reed (a local builder, realtor and church member) and purchased parsonage number five located at **2252 Eisenhower Drive** from Wayne Reed (who had built it). Forty-one years later (2012), the Trustees considered making improvements on the Eisenhower Drive parsonage or to purchase a newer home. The Trustees voted to purchase a newer home and it was approved by the conference. Parsonage number six (built in 2005, purchased in 2012) is located at **2314**

**8th Street.** Some of the features are: an open floor plan, 4-5 bedrooms, main floor laundry room, lower level garage and workshop, back deck, formal dining space, 3 baths, attached double garage, full walk-out basement and a sprinkler system.

**Ladies Groups:** In the early years there were three ladies' groups: The Ladies Aid, Foreign Mission, and Home Mission. The Aid kept the parsonage in repair as early as 1888 and served meals for men' groups of the town. An interesting thing about these meals was that some of the men wished to smoke after their meal, but felt they could not do so in the church. They took their meetings to the Bonham Hotel, which stood where the Union State Motor Bank is now located. The Methodist women also prepared the meals there, and daughters of the ladies served the meals. In 1940, the ladies of all the county Methodist Churches met at the First Methodist Church and formed the Women's Society of Christian Service. The first-year books for the women's group were in 1946 by Mrs. Edith Cobb.

In 1968, the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren (E.U.B.) merged to form the United Methodist Church. Four years later their women's organizations became "United Methodist Women". Our local unit used this new organization as an opportunity to update and revitalize to meet the needs of more women. A committee was formed to learn what kinds of groups might be of interest. A "Sample Night" was held so women could sample the different cluster possibilities. The name Cluster was decided upon instead of Circle because a Cluster means a group of similar things growing together. It reminded them of the scripture verse John 15:5, "I am the Vine, you are the branches." We are growing together as Christians. By the end of 1973, twenty different clusters; meeting morning, afternoon or evening included interests of Bible study, Prayer and Share, Sewing, Reading, Parent-Child Relationships, Family Life Enrichment, Joy, and Outreach action were formed. The membership was 224 women.

In 1986 the HomeSpun Bible Cluster was established; they currently meet on the 2nd Thursday morning of the month, September through May. In 1992 the HomeSpun Evening Cluster began meeting monthly and in 2000 they took on the name C.O.O.L. W.H.I.P. (Cluster Of Organized Ladies Who Have Inspiring Programs). C.O.O.L. W.H.I.P. meets monthly on the 3rd Wednesday evening, September through May. Both clusters are made up of Active Members and Outreach Members. Outreach Members do not attend

meetings, but are involved in the work of the Methodist women by donating food, money and whatever may be needed. There are also Lifetime Service Members. There is a total membership of 76 women. The "United Methodist Women" name was changed to "United Women In Faith" in March of 2022.

The projects of the CCUMC UWIF include: the church library; funeral dinners; Christmas cookie boxes; the annual Rummage to Treasure sale; and for many years the women of the church planned and led a Sunday morning worship service each October, it was known as UMW Sunday. Recently both clusters met jointly to discuss the need to reach out to our young women and mothers of the church and are considering ways to do that.

**Chat, Chew and Do** is a group of women that gather for quality conversation while eating snacks and doing projects for the church. They also provide meals for families with newborns.

**The Men's Groups:** During the ministry of Rev P. H. Chappellear, the Methodist Men's Club was established. Today the UMM meet for a bi-monthly morning breakfast and devotion, participate in the United Methodist Men and Boys Rally, host a special Valentine Dinner, and serve an Annual All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Feed Scramble Meal with donations going towards our youth.

**Music:** Throughout the years our church has been "over the top" blessed with gifted musicians and vocalists. A Chancel Choir has long been a part of our Sanctuary worship service. We have had the Sonshine Choir and Kids Connect that are made up of elementary students that sing for us, the hand bell choir and a group of trumpeters that perform for special events. There have been guest soloists, both instrumental and vocal, piano, organ, and marimba performances by adults as well as the youth.

We have been joined by at least parts of the congregations from **six other Methodist Churches** in the area which have been disbanded for various reasons.

**German Methodist Church - In the early 1930's** members of the German Methodist Church, located at the corner of 6th and Crawford in Clay Center, became part of our congregation. This church had been in existence from about 1882. Their first church was located at 2nd and Clarke. In 1908, they bought the building at 6th and Crawford from the Presbyterians and

moved to this location. This was the location of the church at the time it disbanded and became part of our church.

**Swedish Methodist Church - In the early 1940's** the Swedish Methodist Church at 3rd and Crawford voted to disband and join our congregation. Their first church services were held in a dug-out April 10, 1870, north of Clay Center. There were originally two Swedish Congregations, one at 3rd and Crawford and the other six miles north of Clay Center. The church in town was built in 1892 and has since been converted into a private home.

**South Exeter Church - On September 13, 1953** the South Exeter Church voted to disband and join our church. They were organized March 6, 1880, when J. J. and Melinda Keen gave an acre of land in Sec. 36, Exeter Township to build a church and Edward Thomas Baker and wife gave an acre of land in Sec. 35, Exeter Township to build a parsonage. The Bakers were the grandparents of Mrs. John Mugler. When the church disbanded, they voted to give their church building to the Wakefield church, which became their Sunday School addition.

**Broughton Methodist Church (1965)** - In March of 1887 Rev. S. D. Vincent of Clifton, Kansas organized the first Methodist Episcopal class at Springfield, Kansas. On this organization was based the Broughton Methodist Church. Meetings were held in the Springfield (later Broughton) School house. In 1905 the congregation erected the first church building south of the Broughton townsite on the east side of the road. After this building burned in 1917 a new church was built a half a mile north and on the west side of the road. Organization of formal Sunday School classes for the young people began in the early 1900's. The Children's or Primary Department was formally organized in 1921. The young people's special organization was first known as the Epworth League and later as the Methodist Youth Fellowship. The first Vacation Bible School was held in the church the summer of 1938. The Broughton and the Exeter Churches shared a pastor from 1912 until 1953. The final service of the Broughton Church was held in May of 1965 when the church congregation disbanded due to the construction of the Milford Dam and Reservoir which claimed the village of Broughton. The church building was sold to the Bethany-Hillside EUB Church and moved to the intersection of Clay County roads 396 and 859 east of Clay Center and became known as the Countryside United Methodist Church. Some of the

Broughton congregation became members of Countryside and some were welcomed into our church. A stone monument was placed at the site of the original church in Broughton.

**Clay County UM's Working Together (July 2005)** - The Pastor's Perspective written by Dr. Glenn Tombaugh, Senior Pastor CCUMC - "July 1 begins a new 'appointive year' for United Methodist churches and will bring changes within Clay County churches. With the retirement of Pastor Harlan Nonhof and a reassignment for Pastor Darlene Nonhof, the five churches north of Highway 24 will see changes on Sunday morning. Ebenezer Church will be realigned with the Wakefield and Countryside charges as Pastor Sandra Moore adds a third service to her Sunday morning schedule. Hayes UMC will be served by Rev. Gerald Martin (retired pastor and former UM District Superintendent) and two lay speakers - Gary Oetinger from Morganville and Ron Jackson from Longford. Our church will be assisting by providing limited secretarial and administrative assistance. An announcement regarding a pastor to serve the Morganville-Fact-Green charge has yet to be made. When you add it all up it equals one less full-time pastor for the county.

United Methodists in Clay County have a long history of working together, and for that I am very grateful. As a connectional church I believe that what happens to one of us happens to all of us. While our goal is not merely to keep churches open, it is to ensure that ministry is being done. As we cooperate in that ministry all are strengthened."

**Fact United Methodist Church (2008)** - In 1890, some neighbors in the Fact community in Goshen Township met to discuss the possibility of building a United Brethren Church. After much discussion and many meetings they needed a building for a church, there was only \$50 in the Building Fund and money was very scarce. They were about to dismiss the meeting and put the plans on hold for a while when a member of the group rose to his full stature of more than six feet, and with a resounding thud of his clenched fist upon the table around which they were seated, declared "We will build a church, if I must do it myself." And build they did. The Board of Trustees, desiring to erect a building that would be substantial, attractive, and in harmony with the amount of money they expected to be able to raise, by donation, decided to build the major part of the building of stone; which were donated by Ambrose Boughen and procured from the quarry on what was known as

the Fobroy place. The charter of the Board of Trustee for the church of the United Brethren Church, Fact Class May Day Circuit was given the date August 29, 1890 and filed in the office of Secretary of State (Wm. Higgins) September 1, 1890. In 1958, the addition of a basement and purchase of the former Garfield Center 20'x40' school house was made to provide for the spiritual and social needs of the people, especially those of Youth Fellowship age. A number of important meetings have been held at this church, perhaps one of the most memorable being a revival meeting of several weeks duration conducted by Rev. Testerman & Halbert, at the conclusion of which, the converts formed a continuous line around the inside of the building. In 1968, the EUB Churches and Methodist Churches merged and emerged with the United Methodist Church name. The Fact United Methodist Church served the rural community for 118 years. On April 13, 2008, our church warmly received membership transfers into our congregation. The Fact church building was sold to a private individual who planned to offer it as a place for the community to gather.

**Hayes United Methodist Church (2009)-** In the late 1860's, before there were any school houses, the early settlers of the Hayes Township community were holding religious services in some of their homes. The people that came to this part of Hayes Township were not only of different nationalities (English, Swede, Welsh, German and "Down East Yankees"), they were also varied in their religious beliefs of Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, River Brethren, Baptist, and Episcopalian. However, they all melted together into Americans with one common desire: that of maintaining the Kingdom of God. Eventually, a Charter of the Hayes Methodist Episcopal was filed on September 30, 1886, the church was built in 1886 and dedicated in 1887. The Hayes Church went on to faithfully serve the community for one hundred twenty-three years. The celebration of the church life and de-consecration service was held June 7, 2009, and the following Sunday our congregation received the member transfers. Along with member transfers, a few items became part of our church including: a communion table (that is currently being used at The Way Worship Service in the Family Life Center), two oak side tables, a preacher's chair, child's podium, book case, and a pewter goblet, pitcher and baptismal bowl. On March 18, 2013, the church building (including the pews) was moved to the corner of 9th and Franklin Streets in Clay Center to take on the new life of the Vintage

Gardens Chapel. A stone monument with information of the Hayes Church can be found in the Hayes Cemetery.

**The stained glass windows** of the Clay Center United Methodist Church tell many stories from the Bible. They depict scenes described in Psalms, Matthew, John, Ephesians, and Revelation. Some of the windows include family names or the names of persons honored. The red cross on the shield seen in most of the windows is the symbol of faith. "Therefore, take the whole armor of God..... above all, taking the Shield of Faith." Ephesians 6: 13-16.

Window 1: The harp was the national instrument of the Hebrews and suggests music. "...and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Rev. 14:2 Memorial-J.A. White family

Window 2: Vessels of grapes refer to the sacrament of the Holy Communion. "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:28 Memorial- Frances J. Loader

Window 3: Bethlehem scene with star above. "...for we have seen his star in the east and come to worship him." Matt. 2:2 Memorial-John Marshall

Window 4: The three crosses indicate the Crucifixion. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16 Memorial-Rev. W. H. Underwood

Window 5: The lamb suggests that He is "the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." John 1:36 Memorial

Window 6: This scene depicts the beautiful, eternal dwelling place. "...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalms 23:5 Memorial-Trowbridge family

Window 7: The open bible and the lamp are symbolic of the work of God as "a lamp unto my feet and a light upon our path." Psalms 119: 105

Window 8: in the pointed arch is the Star of David. The six points refer to the attributes of God; Love, Wisdom, Power, Mercy, Justice, and Majesty.

Window 9: The lily symbolizes the resurrection—a bursting forth from that which appears to be dead. “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he was dead, yet shall he live.” John 11:25

Window 10: this group as indicated by the lettering, was provided by the “Ladies Aid” in 1921. In the pointed arch, an older part, is the Star of David. If desired, it may be seen from the balcony. North Lobby: Reynolds family and Wallace family

**Pastors** - including those prior to the official charter of the church to the present.

1865-----Washington Marlatt	1866-1868-Willian Knipe
1869-1871-F Cunningham	1872-----George Wigg
1873-----WJ Finley	1874-----EW VanDeventer
1875-1877-WH Underwood	1878-1880--EF Hill
1881-1883—Edward Gill	1884-1886—JK Miller
1887-----JG Mayor	1888-1890—Josephus Collins
1891-1893—EJ Baskerville	1894-1895—AW Crawford
1896-1897—JG Henderson	1898—1899--HD Rice
1900-1902-FP Blakemore	1903-1905--WB Whitmer
1906-1907—TJ Ream	1908-1912—John Endacott
1913-1914—GA Marvel	1915-1916—JA Arnett
1916-1918—JA Davies	1918-1921—FH Ebright
1921-1925—George Hughes	1925-1930—EH Knepp
1930-1932—Drew Hammond	1932-1934-PH Chappellear
1934-1936 Walter P Wharton	1936-1942—LeRoy Arend
1942-1948—Ernest Hull	1948-1951—Roxie Powell
1951-1958—Elmer Brooks	1958-1971—Howard Von Schriltz
1971-1979—Calvin Hartman	1979-1984--Gene Tromble
1984-1994—Robert Fleenor	1994-2002—Robert Baer
2002-2008—Glenn Tombaugh	2008-2013—Larry Myers
2013-2018—Ryan Lynch	2018-2021—Andrea Beyer
2021-present—Reuben Langat	

We, as a congregation, have been blessed over the years as each of these pastors brought their own personalities, visions, passions and gifts to our church. You will find this list of our pastors on a plaque hanging in the Parlor of the church, near the glass display case. Using wood from a tree in our

church yard, Brad Conner designed and made the plaque. Individual brass plates were added to the wooden plaque; Judy Lloyd had the pastor's names engraved onto the brass plates.

Over the span of time our church has changed names four times. Originally we were known as the **Methodist Episcopal Church**. In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church merged to form the **First Methodist Church**. After the 1968 sessions of the Kansas Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the Kansas Conference and the Central Kansas Conference of the Methodist Church had met, a legal union of those conferences into the Kansas East Conference and the Kansas West Conference of The United Methodist Church was made official July 30, 1968; thus we became the **United Methodist Church**. In 2016, we officially became known as the **Clay Center United Methodist Church**. Currently we are part of the Salina District with Rev. Karen Rice Ratzlaff as our District Superintendent. Rev. Dr. David M. Wilson is the current Bishop of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference. The GPUMC formed in 2014 by combining the former Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska United Methodist conferences. The conference has 17 districts, 960 local congregations, 180,000 lay people and nearly 800 active elders, deacons, associate members and local pastors. The GPUMC uses the United Methodist cross and flame logo with the words "Great Plains United Methodists" to demonstrate a focus on the people of Kansas and Nebraska whom the conference serves.

Throughout the years, several young people have gone from our church into full time Christian Service. Those entering the ministry are: William Arnett, Lloyd Shannon, Bruce Marshall, Marianne (Mugler) McMunn, Rick Schulze, Scott Weimer, Eric Rook and Carmen (Benninga) Raines. Nola Smee served as director of the Moore Community House in Biloxi, Mississippi. Ethel Homefeldt returned in 1987 from thirty-nine years of working in the mission field in Africa. Debbie (Slingsby) Abner served with the Salvation Army for 27 years in more than one role, retiring as the Kansas and Western Missouri Divisional Assistant Director of Disaster Services. In 2023 Riley Griggs and his wife entered into the mission field; they are currently serving in Africa.

**Due to a new worldwide virus, called COVID 19,** (spread through breathing an infected persons droplets or breath particles) literally everything was shut down in March, 2020 - gatherings, travel, even leaving

your home. It changed the way we got groceries and other supplies, to employees working from home, and for some, losing their jobs! For two years we lived with restrictions issued by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) for gatherings and travels, as well as warnings to wear face masks, sanitize everything, and social distance (six feet apart). For some, COVID19 vaccinations were mandatory. This presented quite a challenge to make decisions of how to keep our parishioners safe while continuing Our Vision: Worship, Witness, Serve.

Fortunately, our church already had in place technology, equipment, and crew to make it possible to "worship online" from home via an internet service. Committee meetings could be done via Zoom Video Communications and then later went back to in-person meetings but with "social distancing". Masks were worn and tables and other items were "sanitized" after each gathering. We adjusted to seeing and using touchless hand sanitizer stations with disposable masks on stands that were at each church entrance. The choir could no longer be part of the sanctuary service (singing spewed breath droplets into the air). Events including weddings and memorial services were postponed; having to postpone memorial services honoring our loved ones that had passed away was probably one of the most difficult to deal with. Before Covid, there were Sunday School classes for Nursery through High School plus five adult classes. Two adult Sunday Classes continued to meet (using creative ways) during Covid, while all other classes were suspended. Nursery and high school classes did eventually resume. Two of the adult classes are making plans to restart. Holy Communion was one of the challenges that was met in more than one way. "Communion Kits" were made available for order and pickup inside the east door of the church to be used May 17, 2020. The kits contained bread and grape juice that had been blessed and a bulletin with scripture, a prayer, responses to communion liturgy and these instructions "Holy Communion is a vital part of any Christian worshipping community. This kit is intended for you and your household to share in our act of Holy Communion during worship together with Clay Center United Methodist Church on Sunday, May 17 as a church family. Even though we are separated by distance, we are one together with Christ. These elements have already been blessed for you. If you are unable to join our online or TV worship service and partake of them along with us in worship, you may use the prayer below and the Lord's Prayer as you join in Holy Communion with us." Other times, when we worshiped from home, we

were instructed to bring food items from our kitchen to substitute for the elements.

Scott Barnum, Hays District Director of Lay Servant Ministries, shared these thoughts April 28, 2020 about Grief and the Covid 19 Crisis. "I recently read an article on the internet (so you know it must be true!) from Harvard Business Review that referenced our emotions in this time of COVID-19. Some of their staff recently met virtually, a screen full of faces in a scene becoming more common everywhere. They talked of many COVID-related things and emotions, but one mentioned that what she was feeling was grief...and there were a lot of nodding faces. David Kessler, in his book On Grief and Grieving, offers that we feel a number of different griefs. Today we feel the world has changed, and it has. We know this is temporary, but it doesn't feel that way, and we realize things will be different. Just as going to the airport is forever different than how it was before 9-11, things will change and this is the point at which they changed. The loss of normalcy; the fear of economic toll; the loss of connection. This is hitting us and we're grieving. Collectively. We are not used to this kind of collective grief in the air; and there's something powerful about naming this as grief. It helps us to feel what's inside of us. When you name it, you feel it and it moves through you. Emotions need motion. It's important to acknowledge what we go through."

Covid 19 Statistics:

As of 08-21-2023 Worldwide: over 690 million cases/over 6.9 million deaths

As of 08-21-2023 USA: over 107 million cases/ over 1.1 million deaths

As of 05-31-2023 Kansas: 946,564 cases/10,229 deaths

As of 07-23-2023 Clay County: 2,415 cases/35 deaths

Rev. Reuben Langat Ph.D. began as our interim pastor February 1, 2021 and continues to bless our church congregation as our current pastor. In his message in the January 2022 *Enlightener* (Monthly newsletter of CCUMC) he made mention of the pandemic: "Till now, God has helped us during the season of pandemic. We continue to pray that it will go away soon. Till now, God has helped us with good attendance, thank you for your faithfulness and by inviting friends and family members to our services. I thank you too for

your financial support to our church and other ministries we support through our church. We also have some faithful people who watch our services online and have sent us their finances to support the church, I deeply appreciate them. Yes, till now God has helped us!"

**Our Vision:** Worship, Witness, Serve

**Our Mission:** Worship God who loves us. Share our faith by building relationships. Bring hope to the world we serve.

**February 2023: The Clay Center United Methodist Church** was chosen as one of four churches in the Great Plains Conference to host representatives from the Discipleship Leadership Ministry Team including Rev. Dr. Evan Young and Elza Helena Soares, Ph.D., along with Rev. Jeff Clinger Director of Congregational Excellence from the Great Plains Conference and our D.S. Karen Rice Ratzlaff. Their visit was brought about by their desire to learn about the Clay Center United Methodist Church. With an increase in weekly worship attendance, new members joining the church, an active youth group, etc., our church is becoming a noticed bright spot in the Conference. Along with our church leadership, it was our pleasure and honor to host this gathering and share all that is going on here. Thank you to each and every person that calls CCUMC "home." You are a part of this movement and we are excited about the lives that are being changed for Christ's Kingdom.

**Current CCUMC Staff** is Pastor: Rev. Reuben Langat, Ph.D.; Church Coordinator: Marabeth Conner; Director of Children & Youth: Sakiusa (Zac) Rokovasa Vakadewatabua; Visitation Assistant: Herb Mugler; Administrative Assistant: Gail Edmiston; Treasurer: Maureen Pfizenmaier; Financial Secretary: Jolie Kasper; Custodian: Austin Burr; and Organist: Cathy Hafner.

At present time we offer two worship services on Sunday mornings with Sunday School in between. The Way Service (8:45) is a relaxed style worship service that meets in the Family Life Center. Come as you are, grab a cup of coffee and a cookie and join us for a family oriented 45 minute service of scripture, prayer, message and lively music led by our Praise Team. Our Sanctuary Service begins at 10:30 and has a more traditional feel with music led by our song leader and piano or organ. Our beautiful sanctuary is a bit more formal but is very family friendly. This service is 45-60 minutes of hymns, scripture, music, and message. In between the two services is time

for Sunday school for all ages. Classes are offered for Preschool, Kindergarten, grades 1-8 participate in JAM-Jesus And Me, a high school class and also classes for adults. It is time for small group study and fellowship.

**Children and Youth Ministries** have always been a focus of the church. Children Learning About Yahweh (CLAY) is the name currently given to the Children and Youth Ministries of the CLAY Center United Methodist Church. There are two after school programs that meet from 3:30 to 5:00 pm. The Adventurers (1st through 3rd graders from Lincoln Grade School) on Tuesdays and The Power Pack (4th and 5th graders from Garfield Grade School) on Thursdays meet in the church basement. We start by reciting our pledge and prayer, followed by a snack, review of our Bible curriculum, learning about the Old and New Testaments, reciting our memory verses, and doing fun crafts to help us understand our Bible stories better. The Middle School and High School Youth meet Wednesday evenings 6:15 to 7:30 pm after enjoying a Scramble meal. The Middle School meet in the Fellowship Hall and the High School meet in the Youth Room. All sessions are led by our high school leadership team. In the summer of 2023 our church sponsored 21 youth and nine adults to a week long BOLD Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida. Plans are underway and funds are being raised for the next conference in 2027.

As in the past, there are many ways the congregation supports the church today. The people of the church share their time and talents, their prayers, and their financial support. The congregation supports the building, its members, the community, and the world.

Along with the church trustees, there are committees to oversee memorials, the church finances, nominations of committee members, selection of students to receive available scholarships, Vacation Bible School directors, directors of J.A.M. (Jesus And Me program replaced Sunday School), Youth Ministry Leadership Team, and a liaison between the staff and parish. The committees are made of three, six or nine members and each committee person serves a three year term.

**2023 monthly Missions:** The congregation has the opportunity to contribute financially to support the following missions with one mission highlighted each month during the year:

**Blanket Sunday** (January) Distributing blankets through Church World Services.

**UMCOR** United Methodist Committee on Relief (February and March) Provides support to children, families, and communities who suffer from natural or human-caused disasters - famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events.

**Clay Center United Methodist Blessing Box** (April) In 2020, thanks to the Helping Hands Ministry we now have a Blessing Box at the Family Life Center entrance. Dwight Ferguson built it; he and Tom Nelson installed it. Feel free to drop off donations of non-perishables, hygiene products, cleaning supplies, etc. This ministry is there to help our neighbors, so take what you need and give what you can.

**Vacation Bible School** (May) Goes to the purchase of curriculum, art supplies, snacks, decorations and music for 100 plus children of our church and community. This is a wonderful mission that helps our kids grow in their faith.

**Lighthouse for Christ** (June) Lighthouse for Christ is a food or agriculture program in Clay Center, KS whose mission is: Provide financial assistance for utilities, rent and other daily living expenses and was formed in 1988 to help Clay County residents.

**Garfield Neighbors** (July) Our monetary donations help fund the following items at Garfield Elementary: Birthday treats for those that can't afford them, emergency clothing needs, special rewards such as parties or treats, temporary meal money, supplies for unplanned emergencies or events. The Staff at Garfield determines how the money is spent. This allows all children to be included and taken care of.

**Numana** (August and September) This international hunger relief organization is based in El Dorado, Kansas. Numana events provide a hands-on-project in which almost any age or skill can participate in the packaging of meals that serve to feed the hungry around the world. We started working with Numana in 2018, and to date approximately \$38,600.00 has been raised packaging over 87,000 meals.

**K-State Wesley** (October) Supporting the campus ministry of the UMC on the K-State campus open to young adults in the Manhattan area, not just KSU students. Their purpose is to reach out to young people through friendship and hospitality and become a community based on Jesus Christ.

**Ember Hope** (November and December) is an agency that began in 1927 by the UMC as an orphanage and has evolved into a 501(c)3 nonprofit,

faith-based agency committee to develop innovative programs that inspire change in at-risk youth and families.

**2023 Ministry Teams.** Each year the congregation has the opportunity to share their gifts by signing up to be part of the following Ministry Teams:

**Missions Team:** Promote the Mission of the Month and other mission opportunities for CCUMC to make a difference in the world.

**College Students:** Create and send care packages to our college students during the semesters.

**Garfield Neighbors:** Support students, teachers and staff at Garfield Elementary through various ways.

**Special Events:** Plan events for the church and community. Currently Maureen Pfizenmier heads up this enthusiastic team. Events have included: Bonfires/hot dog roasts in the fall; BYOM (Bring Your Own Meal) gatherings are held at various locations and usually include delicious desserts; Christmas Eve Pot-Luck Dinner; Kansas Day Dinner with mind stumping Kansas trivia along with a delicious meal; Palm Sunday sing-a-long with a breakfast meal; Soup Supper to raise funds for Heart of Africa; Homemade ice cream social and Pool Party; Mexican Fiesta scramble meal; Fishing-Food and-Fun at Taddiken's pond; Hawaiian Luau scramble meal with proceeds going to Lahaina UMC of Maui, which was destroyed in a recent wildfire.

**Scramble Ministry Team:** Recruit people and organizations to host Scramble. (Wednesday evening meal served in the Family Life Center and open to the public).

**Prayer Ministry:** Develop the culture of prayer at CCUMC through prayer initiatives.

**Health Ministry:** Encourage a healthy congregation through Faithfully Fit, blood pressure checks and more. They were instrumental in installing an AED (automated external defibrillator).

**Prayers & Squares** is an interfaith outreach ministry that combines the gift of prayer with the gift of a hand-tied quilt. Its purpose is not to make and distribute quilts, but to promote prayer through the use of quilts. The idea behind these prayer quilts is simple. A heavy thread is used to take stitches through the quilt layers and the ends are left free to be tied with a square knot. As each knot is tied, a silent prayer is said for someone in special need, who then receives the finished quilt. Team members assist in making prayer quilts for individuals or families. Since Frances Benson invited people

to become part of this ministry in 2008, 366 Prayer Quilts and Baptism Quilts have been constructed, dedicated, ties tied and prayers prayed.

**K-State Wesley:** Help our mission partner through prayer, serving a Sunday night meal and promoting K-State Wesley at CCUMC.

**Vacation Bible School:** Assist with Vacation Bible School.

**Hospitality Team:** Be part of a team that intentionally offers radical hospitality to all.

**Harvesters:** On the first Monday of each month, fresh produce and other food items are distributed at the Clay County FairGrounds. There are no income guidelines. We have been a community partner with this organization since 2021. Since June of 2021, we have recorded more than 9,400 served; children, adults, and seniors. A group of volunteers from our church meet the truck to pass out the food. In 2022 we served 2,110 households, 4,609 individuals, 118,206 pounds acquired from Harvesters for a total of 98,505 meals distributed from the food acquired from Harvesters.

Also, **Harvesters Back Snacks** are delivered to the Lincoln and Garfield grade schools each week during the school year. The Back Snacks program provides nutritious child friendly food for students to take home over the weekend. They go home with about 135 elementary children weekly.

**2023 Ministry Volunteers** Each year the congregation has the opportunity to share their gifts by to be a volunteer for the following ministries:

**Prayer Chain:** Sign up for an email alert of prayer requests and then pray for those requests.

**Serve Funeral Dinners** This is headed by the United Methodist Women. They organize the donation of food and schedule workers to provide a nice lunch for grieving families.

**Local Helping Hands:** If you have a "need" that is too big for you, but you feel it might be too small to hire someone, we have a ready and willing Ministry Team called "Helping Hands." This is a group of men and women that are equipped with many God-given talents and are willing to lovingly use them to help those in need.

**Transportation:** Drive people to doctor appointments, hospital visits or other urgent causes.

**Meals on Wheels:** One of our church's outreach ministries includes delivering meals to senior citizens for the Meals on Wheels program. Several of our local churches help with this very important outreach, and CCUMC serves the program two months out of every year. Approximately 20 church

volunteers assist in, delivering approximately 60 meals per day, Monday through Friday. For many of the recipients, it is the only personal interaction they have in their day, making it an important community outreach. Our church coordinator, Marabeth Conner, is presently organizing the schedule for deliveries. Prior to this, Doris Ferguson did the scheduling, and we thank her (and Dwight) for their many years of service to the Meals on Wheels program!

**Secretary/Office Help:** Help with various office tasks and/or fill in when the secretary is out.

**Custodial Help:** Assist with cleaning and maintenance of the church as needed.

**Sunday School Teacher:** (Quarterly)

**Youth Group:** Assist the director with supervision of Youth Group activities.

**Congregational Care Team** was initiated by Pastor Ryan Lynch. Herb Mugler (Visitation Assistant) oversees this ministry team. Currently there are eleven team members who monthly visit about thirty-four members (plus a few non-members) of our church family who can not get out or who need extra care and prayer. Their mission is to visit and contact members of our church family on a regular basis to build relationships and keep a strong personal connection with the church.

**Short Term Study Leader:** Someone who organizes a Bible study for anyone interested.

**2023 Worship Volunteer opportunities** include:

At The Way Worship Service (8:45 am): Worship space set up, The Way Cup Coffee Bar, Greeter, and/or Lay Reader (4th grade and up).

At the Sanctuary Worship Service (10:30 am) Candle Lighter, Song Leader, Usher, Greeter and/or Lay Reader (4th grade and up).

**Other worship opportunities:** Audio/Visual (Sound, Camera, Slides, 7th Grade and up); Young Christian Lesson; Communion Steward; Hand Bell Choir; Worship Visual Design; and Special Music.

**Other ministry opportunities, ways to connect, and current traditions of our church:**

**Blessing of the Backpacks** is part of both services in mid August. Students of all ages are asked to bring their backpacks to worship to receive a special blessing.

**Fourth Graders' Bibles** - Our 4th Graders are presented with their own New Adventure Bibles at the beginning of the school year.

**High School seniors** are each presented the Wesley Study Bible at the end of their senior year.

**The Lighthouse for Christ** is a not-for-profit organization that first opened its doors in 1989. CCUMC's Rev. Bob Fleener (who had been praying for someone to begin a ministry like this) and Debbie (Slingsby who had grown up at CCUMC) and her husband Dave Abner (who while at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, answered a specific and very unexpected call to minister to those in need of a helping hand in Clay Center, Kansas) along with several others and much prayer gave the Lighthouse its beginning. Debbie (Slingsby) Abner was the first director, Donna Girton served the Lighthouse many years, followed by Kathy Cox and currently Abby Sprague. The Lighthouse for Christ operates through a God-given vision to give temporary and emergency assistance to those in Clay County that are in need. It is supported solely by donations from churches, individuals, civic groups and the general public. They are blessed with a volunteer workforce who, guided by the unselfish desire to serve, offer the best within themselves to ensure that all families in our community can look forward to a better tomorrow. They are committed to helping provide food and clothing, as well as some household items and furniture. Financial help is also available in limited amounts. These services are offered with a required pastors signature. The Thrift Store assures that everyone's needs can be met and then some! We trust all who enter feel God's love and welcome everyone to stop by!

**Operation Christmas Child** is a project of Samaritan's Purse. The mission is to demonstrate God's love to children in need worldwide by providing tangible gifts and sharing the good News of Jesus Christ. Marsha (Mugler) Argo brought this mission to our church while she was serving as the Youth Coordinator. CCUMC became more connected to OCC in 2021 when Rev. Reuben Langat, Ph.D. of Kenya became our Pastor and Sakiusa "Zac" Vakadewatabua of Fiji became our Director of Children and Youth. Mercy and Brian (Pastor Reuben's children) and Zac, as a child himself, received a Shoe Box through OCC in their homeland. Zac was close to tears when he was told that OCC is a mission of the Youth. Zac has become an official spokesperson for OCC. Frances Benson is the project leader. It is our goal that these packed, paid-for, prayed over shoeboxes will change the lives of children worldwide and spread the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. In 2021 the goal was to pack 50 shoeboxes and 117 were sent to

Peru. In 2022, 200 shoeboxes was the goal and 411 were filled and sent to Mexico and Benin in west Africa. This year, 2023, our goal is 500 shoeboxes.

**The Community Church Camp** project raises money to send Clay County kids to a church camp. It came about when CCUMC member Scott Taddiken was asked if he could transport some kids to a church camp. After hearing the comments of those kids when returning from church camp and seeing the need for funding camp fees, he put out a call "for anyone interested in helping fund and transport kids to summer church camps". Five people answered the call and thus was born The Community Church Camp Project. That was 2013. Since then, members of other churches in Clay County have become part of this worthwhile endeavor and thousands of dollars have been raised to send over 700 hundred children to Christian based summer church camps.

**Christmas Cookie Boxes** (a project of the United Methodist Women) for members of the congregation who are homebound, who have lost a loved one in the past year, in our special "85 and over " category, or experiencing a health issue. In 2022 over 70 boxes were delivered. Some of those goody box recipients were also blessed with caroling.

**The Rummage to Treasure Sale** is a project of the United Methodist Women and steered by Linda Henry. Several thousand dollars are raised annually. The congregation and community have been very generous. The money raised goes to local and international missions, such as the Lighthouse for Christ, Heart of Africa, Community Church Camp, VBS, Numana and Operation Christmas Child, just to name a few.

**Our Church library** began with a small collection of Bible and reference books. It is now serving a variety of reading interests and used by church and community. For the last several years the United Methodist Women have purchased ten to twelve new books each year through the UMW Reading Program; books are selected from categories of Education for Mission, Leadership Development, Nurturing for Community, Spiritual Growth, Social Action, and Children. In April 2022 two shelves were cleared for a new section called a Sharing Library. It is an area where you can leave a book to share or take a book, return that book later or pass it onto another book worm.

**The Video Library** is located in the basement at the bottom of the front stairs (east entrance of the church). There is a nice selection of movies for families to enjoy.

**Faithfully Fit Forever** is an exercise program that is adaptable to all ages, gender and abilities that was begun in 2004 by Peggy Schulze. It is open to everyone in the community. There is a fee of ten dollars for the sixteen week program to cover the cost of equipment. This fall Ruth Ann Johnson and Donna Klein will lead the evening class (Tuesday and Thursday at 5:00 pm) and Korlea Slagle will lead the morning class (Wednesday and Friday at 9:15 am). Participants of these classes include a mix of CCUMC members plus members of the community.

**Women's Short Term Bible Studies** are offered several times throughout the year. Both a morning class and an evening class is offered making it possible for women of all ages to be able to attend when it works best for them. The ladies look forward to the "mixers" and the fellowship.

**Halloween Howl/Trunk or Treat** has been a long time tradition. With donated treats our church was able to take part in the Annual Halloween Howl in downtown Clay Center. In 2022, we gave out 450 bags of goodies to all of the children. It was a fun way to spread the sweetness of Jesus to the kids of our community.

**Hanging of the Greens:** The church is decorated for the Advent Season by the work of many behind the scenes helpers. Our church is at its most beautiful during this time of the year.

**Christmas Caroling** has been a long time tradition. In 2022 all the women of the church were invited to meet at the church. The carolers made the rounds to the Advena, Liberty Place and The Presbyterian Manor to sing Christmas Carols. Their audiences were invited to make requests and to sing along. The ladies concluded the evening with a meal, lots of conversation, and sharing all of the blessings received.

**Recycle trailer:** Several years ago a trailer was fabricated and now sets on the north parking lot of the church. Aluminum cans are placed into the trailer. When the trailer is full, one of the church trustees takes it to a local salvage yard and sells the aluminum. Currently, the funds are deposited into the United Methodist Women's account and UMW donates the money to the Community Church Camp Project.

**Tuesdays @ Ten** was the idea of Cathy Hafner, Maureen Pfizenmier and Marabeth Conner during the pastorate of Rev. Andrea Beyer. Members were invited for a time of personal prayer in the church sanctuary where they would find lit candles along the altar and music softly playing. In 2022, when Pastor Reuben Langat wanted a time for members to gather for food and fellowship during the weekday, it was decided to combine that activity with

Tuesdays @ Ten. Now, members may pick up a bulletin with a devotion and list of people needing prayer, enter the sanctuary for personal prayer and then go into the Family Life Center for coffee and conversation (building relationships).

**Collecting Quarters** was begun by Pastor Rev. Reuben Langat, Ph.D. During the offering time at both worship services the young children walk around collecting quarters from members of the congregation. The children bring the quarters to the altar and place them in a collection tube. Pastor Reuben invites the children to join him holding the collection plates/baskets as he prays over the offering. When the collection tube is full, the children get to vote on what or who they want their offering of quarters to be given to.

**Scramble** The idea of a weekly meal with a variety of programs started in July of 2004 as a way to use the new Family Life Center. After the light meal, those attending could "scramble" to whatever sparked their interest such as a Bible study lesson, an informational program or perhaps a volleyball game. Crafts were offered to the children. Eventually the programs stopped but the name and the meals continued. The success of the Summer Scramble led to the continuation of what has become a very popular event. To date, there have been over 850 meals served to raise money not only for our church but community groups such as ball teams, music programs in USD 379, Lions Club, CCARE, (animal shelter), and Rotary. It has also been used as a fundraiser for those in need, sponsored by Thrivent and managed by Linda Underwood. Many have been blessed by being fed a meal and having fellowship with our neighbors.

**Delivering Scramble Meals** on Wednesdays is one more act of service that has recently been added; volunteers deliver Scramble Meals to our CCUMC members who request them.

**Pilgrimage** In 2019, The Great Plains Conference sponsored a trip to the Holy Land that was very meaningful to those who went. Seventeen members from this congregation and two community members went. To walk where Jesus walked was very inspiring. Ruth Ann Johnson said of the trip "You read the Bible in black and white. After this experience you will experience the Bible in Living Color!" Linda Henry's highlights were the rededication of her baptism in the River Jordan and praying at the Wailing Wall. Both ladies recommend taking advantage of any opportunity to visit the Holy Land.

**CCUMC's Current traditions of added services celebrating the Christian Year:**

**Season of Lent:**

**Ash Wednesday Service** (the Wednesday 6 weeks before Easter Sunday) is celebrated Wednesday evening at 6:30.

**Lenten Service & Luncheon** is held on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday, open to the community, sponsored by the Clay County Council on Ministries (United Methodist Churches of Clay County) begins at 12:05 allowing employed individuals to attend, 25 minute worship service in the Sanctuary and light lunch served in the Family Life Center.

**Maundy Thursday:** Thursday before Easter, at 7 pm in the sanctuary.

**Good Friday:** Friday before Easter, at 7 pm in the sanctuary.

**Sunrise Service** Easter Sunday Morning at 6:30 am, on the grounds of the Clay Center Country Club, 1568 Navajo Road, with the CCUMC Youth Group leading the service.

**Breakfast** following Sunrise Service served in the Family Life Center.

**Christmas Season:**

**The Blue Christmas Service** is held in the evening a few days before Christmas. It is a service of remembrance and hope for those that find the holidays difficult and is open to the community.

**Christmas Eve Schedule:**

**4:30 pm** Worship in the Family Life Center

**5:30 pm** Pot-Luck Dinner

**7:00 pm** Worship in the Sanctuary

**THE ENLIGHTENER** (our church monthly newsletter). In **1971** **The Methodist Newsletter** (an 8-½"x17" paper) was sent to the church members. It contained a devotion, news, church finances and a calendar of that month's events and meetings. In **1974** it was renamed **The Enlightener**. January 13, **1984** - First Issue *New Enlightener - Review* reported "For several months persons have been hard at work planning for our new church newspaper. Our **Enlightener-Review**, replacing the former monthly *Enlightener*, will come to your home every two weeks. It will bring news from our local church on the front page (sometimes on the back page), news from United Methodist Churches in our United Methodist Kansas West Conference, and national and international religious news. Our church is one of eleven churches in our Annual Conference who are producing a local church edition for their members and friends. Mary Ann (Bergmeier) will

serve as Editor and type copy for the local church page of the new newspaper. The Communications Committee, Wm. Peter, Chairman, Barbara Booth, Al Kirtley and Grace Martyn will help with policy, financing and administration. Rev. Tromble has been busy with general oversight and photographer duties." In April **2004**, the United Methodist Church *Enlightener* reported "As of this issue we are printing the *Enlightener* "in house" on our new copier." It went from a "newspaper form" to a "newsletter form" and was six pages. Currently ***The Enlightenment*** (7 to 10 pages) reaches 345 families through the U.S. Postal Service plus many families via our website and email. It contains a calendar with upcoming events; list of members celebrating 85 years and over birthdays and 50 years and over anniversaries for the month; prayer list; messages from Pastor Reuben, Church Coordinator Marabeth, Youth Pastor Zac; photos and stories of events and activities; and more.

### **The Story of Two Bell Towers, One Church Steeple and The Sound of Our Church Bell Ringing Once Again:**

Construction of the church building was begun in 1883, completed in 1885 and dedication services were held on Sunday, March 3, 1885. The dimensions of the building were 90' x 100' with the tower rising 106 feet above the sidewalk. The bell was cast in Baltimore, MD in 1887 and was installed in the tower the same year. Townspeople were called to worship by the 1,800 pound bell when it rang in its bell tower.



Inscriptions on the church bell;  
the front side:  
1st M.E. Church  
Clay Center, Kansas  
T.J. Mayor Pastor  
And on the back side of the bell:  
McShane Bell Foundry  
Henry Shane and Co.  
Trademark 1887

In 1925 or 1926 during an extensive face-lift of the building, it was feared the 33 foot steeple had deteriorated to the point of being unsafe and was taken down. This is a recount of the unusual process as told by George Pfile. He said "Al Kimbrough climbed up on the outside of the steeple and tied a large rope around the top; then ordinary carpenter hand saws were used to cut the posts on the corners nearly through. The other end of the rope was

tied to the rear axle of his Model T Ford car, and while he pulled with the car, Al Kimbrough sawed off the rest of the posts on the south side of the steeple, allowing it to fall over the north side of the building - part on the churchyard and the rest in the street."

On September 15, 1978 when the church was remodeled, the bell was brought down and stored in Leo Chapman's shed. A decision was made to place the bell in the church basement. Wilfred Abels, Gail Bauer, Leo Chapman and Floyd Nelson procured forklifts from Hutchinson Manufacturing and Gilmore-Tatge. The bell was moved to a vacant building of Dan Ward's and was cleaned. Wayne Reed applied a finishing coat to protect the bell's surface. As it was moved in 1981, to the lower narthex, the bell weighed 1,380 pounds. Also, at that time a newly designed top to the bell tower was installed.

September 27, 1999 a local newspaper story reported "A swelling bulge and expanding crack in the old bell tower wall of the old First Methodist Church has forced parishioners to move their services to CCCHS (Clay Center Community High School) auditorium. Problems have plagued the more than 100-year-old tower for a number of years, but deterioration accelerated in the past month and church officials have closed the old part of the building". Barbara Booth noted in her BELL TOWER 2000 story: "The bell sits at the foot of the stairs below the narthex. Speakers for a 'tape' carillon have been mounted in the tower top since the last time the structure was done (1978). At that time the wooden turret top was added to the bell tower. The engineers who checked the situation during the past several years have suggested we should stop using the speakers because of the risk from their sound vibrations. Now they sit silent. The tape player system was also becoming less workable, so non-use happened for both reasons."



In March of 2000 a major project to remove the top to the bell tower and much of the bell tower began. As previously mentioned, during that time church service was held at Clay Center Community High School auditorium.



Completion of the major project was accomplished in time for the grateful congregation to return to the church sanctuary for the Easter services. Also, just in time for the (scheduled back in the summer of 1999) April 8, 2000 wedding date of Karla Wilder and Nick Fickes.

Removal of the bell tower in 2000 drastically changed the appearance of the church. The bell remained in the lower narthex.



May 11, 2019 after the funeral of Mike Deighton, Bruce Bauer and Herb Mugler were visiting. They both said that they loved the tolling of the bell at Mike's funeral. Herb shared with Bruce that he would love to see the bell back up in a tower in his lifetime; and Bruce said that he would help. Herb went on to say that it was his dream to see the Bell in a Tower before the 150th anniversary of the church. Bruce and Herb secured a large part of the funding for the new bell tower project, went through the channels of the church trustees and church council for approval, and the "bell" started rolling. The Verdin Company in Cincinnati, Ohio, was chosen to design and fabricate the bell tower.



September 7, 2021 that 1,380 pound bell was removed from its metal frame and carefully brought up from the lower narthex by Bruce Bauer, Rick Chaffee, Dallas Cunningham, Nick Fickes and Bill Oetinger using equipment supplied by Oetinger-Lloyd Construction.



The bell was loaded onto a truck and temporarily stored in a warehouse.

Bruce Bauer has a special connection to the bell, as his father Gail Bauer was part of the crew that placed the bell and its frame into the church basement narthex in 1981.

On October 14, 2021 Bruce and Faun Bauer delivered the bell to The Verdin Company in Ohio. Along the way, they dropped off the bell's original 400 pound plus stand in St. Louis at the business that had made it in 1887.

In May of 2022, Nick Fickes (an employee of Oetinger-Lloyd Construction and grateful groom that was married in the church April 8, 2000) began to fabricate the base (according to the specifications of The Verdin Company) for the soon-to-arrive bell tower and bell. Colby Urban and his AgLand Electric LLC crew were in charge of the electrical wiring to connect our refurbished bell in the new bell tower to our church building.



On June 15, 2022 at 9 am our Special Events Committee sponsored a Bell Tower Watch Party providing delicious treats, soft drinks and coffee.



The following is a note from the Bell Tower Committee that was published in the July 2022 *Enlightner*: "Our bell tower project was completed Wednesday, June 15th with the delivery of the tower, bell, and cross. It was placed in front of our church with many fans across the street watching history in progress. The bell is 135 years old and was refurbished by The Verdin Company who also made us a new 3-legged, 40 foot tower including a 10 foot cross on the top. There is metal casing under the cross for speakers which could be added in the future.



It took approximately two hours to install everything. Our refurbished bell is electronically controlled and rings when programmed to ring. Many individuals from our church donated funds, time, energy, and skills to make this project happen. We want to thank everyone that helped get this project completed before our upcoming 150th celebration of our church."

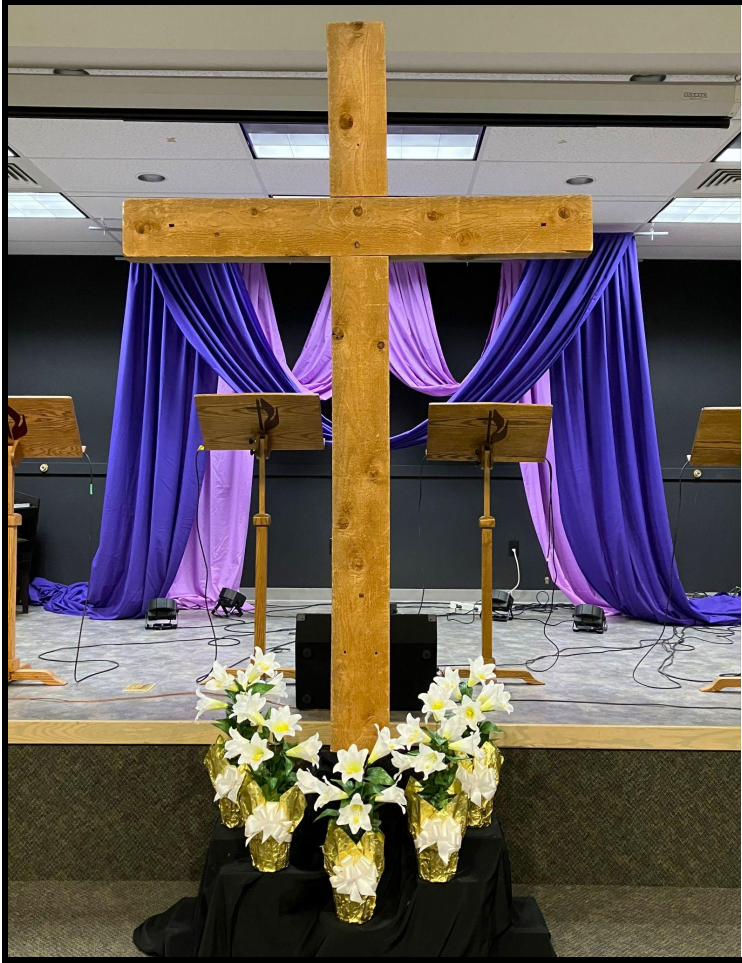
We know the buildings are but outward signs of His love, the real church is the people, the love of God and the Holy Spirit among us. Looking back over 150 years of history, it is with faith that our ancestors persevered knowing that someday, someone else would reap those benefits. And what we do in faith today will benefit our children's children. And so, today, we CELEBRATE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS.

This history has been written using information gleaned from the Clay and Riley County Historical Societies; Clay County Kansas Heritage 1990 book; Melinda Rittgers, CA, University Archivist & Museum Director of Kansas United Methodist Archivist; Brief History of the Clay Center Methodist Church written by Rev. W. H. Underwood in 1908 and 1911; Great Plains United Methodist website; church bulletins and *Enlighteners*; the *Clay Center Dispatch*; Barb Booth's history of the Bell Tower; Cover photo was taken by Jamie Bloom, photos of taking down the bell tower were taken by Donna Karmann; resources as noted being quoted; interviews and conversations with many of you; and UMC Directories and past histories written for occasions such as this. This history highlights the information available to us, and although it may not be completely thorough, it does emphasize the importance of ministry and mission of the Clay Center United Methodist Church. We will continue to live out our mission to Worship, Witness and Serve in the name of Jesus Christ for generations to come.

This history was compiled by Linda Cunningham, Libby Mellies and L'Jeane Mugler. It was time well spent and we thank you.

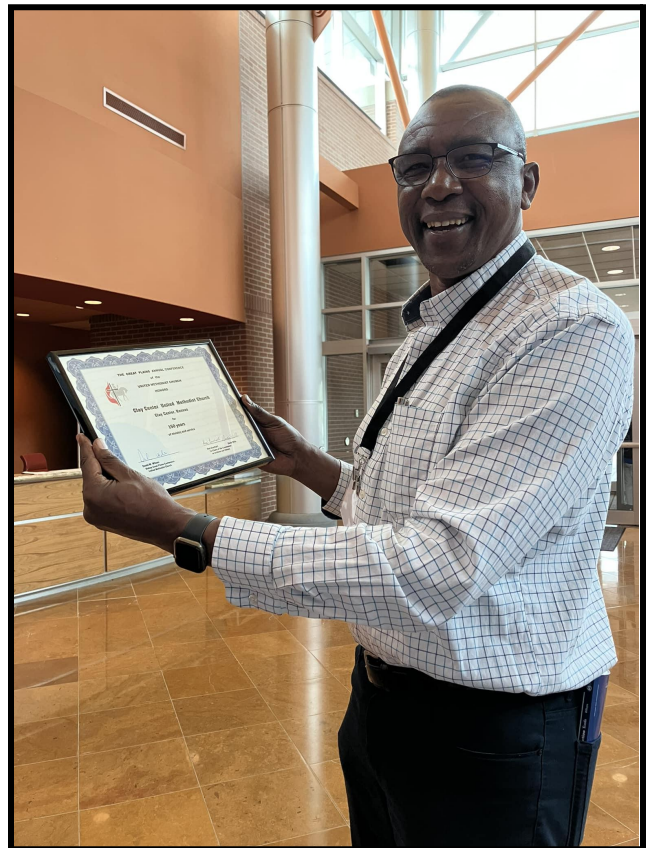
A Prayer for This Church by Thomas Albert Stafford

**A**LMIGHTY FATHER, we pray that this church may  
always be a fit place for Thy presence.  
Here may there be a welcome for all souls.  
Here may little children learn the kindness of the Good Shepherd.  
Here may young men and maidens  
come to be prepared for the struggle of life.  
Here may both youth and age face aright the problems of our day.  
Here may there be light for life's eventide.  
Here may the strong become aware of their need for Thy power.  
Here may the weak obtain courage.  
Here may the poor and desolate find friends and help.  
Here may those who sorrow  
for their dead have assurance of the life immortal.  
Here may doubts be dispelled as mists before the rising sun.  
Here may those beset by temptation find deliverance.  
Here may wanderers from God find joy in return.  
Here may those living in sin escape from its power.  
Here may the ministry be magnified and  
young men imbued with zeal to enter this sacred work.  
Here may souls be baptized into holy faith  
and bring forth fruit's meet for repentance.  
Here may the sacrament of bread and wine give  
mystic communion with Christ and fellowship in His sufferings.  
Here may there be joined, by true marriage,  
hearts steadfast in love.  
Here there may be preached words of comfort,  
admonition, and divine truth.  
Here may the spirit that makes for peace be cherished  
and the spirit that makes for war be abhorrent.  
Here may Thy children abide in concord  
and explore together the joys of the life of the spirit.  
Here may faith be certified by good works and just stewardship.  
Here may sacrificial giving send the gospel to the ends of the earth.  
Here may all uncharitableness perish.  
Here may Christ be exalted and selfish desires be put to naught.  
And so may this church, through its manifold ministry, be a means of grace and  
blessing to the families within it and pour out its spirit into this whole  
neighborhood. And, when any of its members change their place of abode, may  
the influence of this church go with them, be exercised through them, and thus  
abound elsewhere. All this we ask in the name of Christ, that His Kingdom may  
come, and the will of God be done hereabouts and everywhere. Amen.



Easter 2023 at The Way Service  
in the Family Life Center

The Great Plains Annual Conference was  
held in LaVista, Nebraska,  
June 7-10, 2023 where our  
Pastor Rev. Reuben Langat, Ph.D.  
accepted recognition for our church  
celebrating 150 years of  
God's Faithfulness in Clay Center.  
God is good!





April 9, 2023 - 6:30 am Sunrise Service led by the CCUMC Youth



CCUMC Family Life Center