

125th Anniversary

Collective memories of SUMC from

Members and Guests

Seminole United Methodist Church

Serving Seminole since 1890

From Bettye Rae Crane: “What This Church Means to Me”

“April 1, 2000, Kay Muehlhausen found me wandering around the parking lot, obviously lost. I told her that I had come for the church service, and she said that it was Sunday School time and invited me to join her. We went into the Fellowship Hall where she introduced me to the Horizon class. They welcomed me, and a very knowledgeable man conducted an interesting lesson and discussion on a chapter in Corinthians. It was great, and I wanted to come back for the next lesson. I found out that the teacher was the Minister, so I looked forward to the Church service.

Kay had gone to the early service, so I entered the Sanctuary and chose a seat midway down on the left. Shirley Orr sat down by me, introduced herself, and welcomed me. The service was wonderful: good old Methodist hymns, an inspirational sermon on a Bible text, and a traditional Communion Service. I wept through it all! After the service, Shirley hugged me. I told her that the last member of my family had died just 2 weeks before, and I cried a lot. She said that she still cried some since her husband died 4 years before, so she understood.

She invited me to join her in the Fellowship Hall, and as we were leaving, Harry and Merle Thompson came up to me and said that they were from Birmingham, Alabama, too. I had mentioned that when I was introduced as a

visitor. Harry said that he went to Phillips High School, and I said that I was from Hueytown and went to Bessemer High School. They really made me feel at home!

The next week, Fran Norwood phoned me and asked me what activities I enjoyed. Of course, I said tap dancing! I told her that I would like to join the choir, so Joan called me later and invited me to come to the Wednesday practices.

I've gone into this much detail to show you what it means to a visitor to be cordially welcomed. This is the friendliest, most loving church I've attended. I wanted to become a part of it. It's been more than a year now, and I've enjoyed the Sunday school class and many activities. I celebrated Thanksgiving with John and Dottie Thornton in our Fellowship Hall. They're from Birmingham, too. Christmas, I was invited to join Jamie and Marty at the Phillips' for a wonderful dinner. Being included in family gatherings significantly broke the loneliness of my first holidays alone.

I'm really enthusiastic about the choir and bell choir. It's a privilege to participate with such musically talented and skilled leadership as we have with Joan and Crystal.

So, what does this Church mean to me? Everything. You, the membership, took me in when I was at my lowest, emotionally. With your love and support, I have learned to live alone, unafraid, in God's care. You are my family. Thank you."

From Philip Ware:

"My wife, Shirley Janet Ware, and I moved to St. Petersburg, Florida in September 1958. While there, we had two children: Tommy Ware, and Janet Ware. We moved to Seminole in November 1967 and joined the then Seminole Methodist Church in the winter of 1968. The church had a reception for all the new members and Chairman, Arnett Brown, had us all form a circle and tell our names and from where we came. My son, Tommy Ware, said "I'm

from here, i.e. Florida, but he's (pointing his thumb at me) from up north" (Tommy was the Southerner and I was the Northerner).

In the fall of 1974 I, Philip Ware, was Scoutmaster of Troop 340, Boy Scouts of America, which was and is sponsored by the men of Seminole United Methodist Church. Tim Thompson, son of Harry Thompson, had made the rank of Eagle Scout and it was time to set the date for his National Court of Honor to award him his Eagle Scout. Then David Rimsa was ready and Tim and David wanted to have a double ceremony, so we waited another month. But then Jeff Schmidt was coming up. So all three scouts waited another month. It happened again and again until we had seven scouts. At that time the troop gave \$50 for each National Court of Honor for eagle cane and refreshments, so we had \$350. We had a sit down dinner and all the scout executives and volunteers in the district came along with numerous scouts and family members. The church was filled to capacity for the seven-fold National Court of Honor. The local paper, Seminole Courier at that time, ran a front page picture of all seven scouts with the headline "The Magnificent Seven". It was one of the proudest times I had as Scoutmaster."

From Stephanie Lauster:

"When we organized Spring fest- I enjoyed seeing the church and community interact. It was a lot of work but fun for the day. Jennifer helped with the petting zoo. Bobby and Troop 340 took care of parking. I helped where needed. I remember a good day had by all!"

From John R. Grosjean:

"My wife has bought her complete outfit for years at your thrift store! Also, your food bank has been helping through our family crises! Thanks."

From Anonymous:

“Fran Norwood, our neighbor since 1985 until she went home to be with the Lord, invited us to come to SUMC when we were not going to church-- The best neighbors ever.”

From James Rebholz:

“There are so many memories that I have in this church. From staring as a little child at the beautiful stained glass windows to getting a “harsh stare” from my mother whilst napping (as an acolyte) on the pew behind the pastor. My love for this church is ever-growing. We don’t live in the area anymore, but we visit at times. The main memory I have for this place of worship is fellowship. Fellowship from man/woman alike; it’s always felt like home even after a long time away. Happy 125th SUMC and best wishes in the next 125. Sincerely, (a much older) James Rebholz.”

From Don & Helen Rinker:

“Our gracious neighbor Ruth Burden, invited us to SUMC and introduced us to Pastor Denmark and several members. Pat Pierson was a very welcoming member also.

On August 29, 1993, we joined SUMC along with Joanne MacPherson- she was just a bit uncomfortable finding out Helen was a PIT, but we became fast friends.”

From Marie Verkade:

“Went to get Upper Room to read
I heard singing God heard the need

A life beside my plans
I’m ok washing pots & pans

Not keen for people
Rather face the steeple

I started attending!
A new mending...

People came around
I: music, song, the sound

Things go well I’m ok
A job, a church, people
A new way.”

From the Pierson family:

“In 1968, the Pierson family, Al, Pat and daughters Leigh, Cheryl, and Amy transferred our membership from Trinity Methodist Church to Seminole Methodist Church. Coming from a smaller church to a larger church was a little overwhelming, especially for our daughters. However, the membership of Seminole welcomed us as brothers and sisters in Christ. In no time we were making friendships that have lasted all these years. Fran Norwood and Ilene Carpenter were two that really reached out to us. It did not take long

for us to become involved in this church in so many ways. It was and still is a great pleasure to become part of this Church family.”

From Jerry Marston:

“Dear Friends at Seminole UMC: I have been a seasonal visitor in your area since 1996 (February, March, April). One of the first things I did was come to your worship service on Sunday morning. The church family welcomed me and I felt so much at home. At the coffee hour that morning, Don & Helen Rinker invited me to the Wesleyan Sunday school class and I made many friends in that class through the years.

I plan to see you in February. God bless you all, Jerry Marston “

From Billie & Bob Burg:

“The Chocolate Cake”

“Billie and Bob Burg were in an office in a strip mall on Seminole Boulevard busily painting. Bob had just taken his boards to become a dentist in Florida and Billie was finishing her master’s degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Each weekend they brought their sleeping bags and worked on getting the office ready for Bob’s practice.

There was no McDonald’s, Burger King, cafeteria or any affordable place to eat for them both, so picnics brought from Gainesville were the food for the weekend.

Mary Beth Carren knocked on the front door with a pan of spaghetti seeking to become Bob’s receptionist, which she did. The next weekend there came another knock on the front door. It was Fran Norwood with a pan of her famous chocolate cake. She invited Billie and Bob to come to Seminole United Methodist Church, which they did the following weekend and have attended ever since. The second week of attendance they were invited to

become counselors for the youth as the current youth counselor, Curtis Wright, was leaving to get married. They continued in this position for 7 years.”

From Marilyn Johnson Mohny:

“My great grandparents were charter members of the church. Then, my grandparents and parents were members. I have been blessed to be a member for my entire life.

When I was young, the parsonage was where the Sunday school wing is and the wood church was on the corner. Then in 1938, the wood church was moved back and the one on the corner was built. We were so proud when we were able to build the church we worship in now.

I have attended Sunday school classes in the wooden church steeple, the Log Cabin, and the Sunday school wing we have now. I sang in the choir in the church on the corner. My husband and I were youth counselors when Rev. W.L Joyner was our minister.

The Log Cabin was the center for all of our community activities. Seminole Elementary was the only school and they held their Halloween Carnivals there. There were many showers and wedding receptions held there.

It was so nice when we were able to build the Fellowship Hall and have so many activities there. God has been good to me.”

From Eugene B. Mohny:

“I moved to Seminole as a teenager and went to Sunday school and church with the Johnson family and Clara Campbell. My Sunday school class was held in the kitchen of the Log Cabin. I sat on the kitchen counter to listen to the teacher. I sang in the choir in the church on the corner of Seminole Blvd.

The youth would go caroling on Christmas Eve to all the homes in the

community. We rode in the back of Jesse Johnson's big truck. We always stopped for cookies and hot chocolate at the Ernest Cobb home.

When we built the church we are in now, we had so many attending that we had to put chairs in the aisles and had speakers for people who sat in their cars in the parking lot. I ushered for over twenty-five years, and all of us wore white jackets.

We had a Men's Club with about forty members. The dinners were cooked by five ladies in the church. I have always enjoyed working on projects for the church."

From Fran & Jack Grenzebach:

"After serving 20 years in the U.S. Navy, Jack retired and we moved to St. Petersburg from Jacksonville, FL. He had been hired by a Pharmaceutical Firm out of Rochester, NY. Philip was 5 years old, and Keith was 3. We rented a house across the street from the church and signed Phil up at the Kindergarten class.

Every morning I would put both boys in their red ryder wagon and walk them across the 2 lane Seminole Blvd. We would drop Phil off and Keith & I would walk back home. The day we were waiting for our furniture to arrive, Joanne Miklos walked down to introduce herself and welcome us into the neighborhood. We became instant friends along with her husband Johnny and son, Kenny. I met Alice Newsome at church when the teachers Mrs. Brody & Mrs. Luke asked us both to drive our station wagons on class trips and picnics at Seminole Park. I got a little miffed the day they asked Alice to ride the train and help with the children, and asked me to drive my car to Clearwater to pick them up and drive back to the school.

We did lots of things together, like bowling, camping, and shopping.

It was 50 years ago we met Alice, Joanne, and all our other church family, and we have enjoyed every minute that we have spent here.

Jack recently has been diagnosed with lung cancer, and we chose not to know how much time he has left, but to enjoy every day praising God for all our blessings and friends from Seminole United Methodist Church. He has received over 50 cards, many visits, calls, best of all, prayers. Many thanks to SUMC and David & Mary Carefoot.”

From Norma Eldridge:

“When I first joined the S.M.C., I got enrolled in the Sunday School class. They announced that the class needed a cleaning person to clean the school. I said I would be glad to clean the room. They were thankful I offered to clean the room blinds, chairs and other furniture, floors, and windows. They were pleased with my work. Myrtle, a member of the class, asked me if would start cleaning for her. I worked for her 17 years. We worked together on spring clean time and had a good time working.

My work blossomed, and I started for others church members. Bill and Hellen Finn lived in a water front home. They me to swim with them -there were Dolphins nearby so I got to swim with the Dolphins.

I worked for. France's Huntley. She played the piano when I was cleaning so I had live music. I worked tor Phil Ware he would practice the trombone while I was cleaning so I had music to hear all over the house which I enjoyed. I worked for Dr. Bob Burg and Billie. I did general cleaning and they also ask me to work at their Christmas party, as I worked I enjoyed the live music the Christmas spirit.

I also took care of Joanne Macpherson cat, Rue, what a sweetie.

I worked for Charles Black and wife. He needed a nurse (he called me) to take care of his wife while he did computer work. And I worked for Betty and Roy Kukral. They were my neighbors. I went on a cruise with Betty and other neighbors. We had a great time.

Thank you for letting me work for you SUMC Church-members. I saved most of the money to go towards Cruises. I traveled to different parts of the world --

Paris, Australia, New Zealand, Russia , to name a few. So thank you very much for letting me work for UMC Church -members.

I am now living in a Masonic Home at Union City Ca.”

From Eldoris Borst:

“In 1999, we purchased a condo in Madeira Beach. The first Sunday there, I went to Seminole United Methodist Church and marked “first-time visitor”. That was the start of a great friendship. Joanne MacPherson called and I sat with her in church. Then I met the “church ladies.” I felt so welcomed and started baking cookies like they do. Reverend John & Susan Denmark were there at that time and I was so pleased with this experience, I thank God for that time in my life. My husband and I love this church. Joanne is in Oregon, and I am back in Indiana, but we remain great friends with e-mail.

My daughter and her husband, Elizabeth & William Murphy, bought our condo and when they are there, they attend Seminole UMC. They love the church also. God is good. I also have a room named for me, “The Eldoris Room.” How kind of the UMW. I feel blessed.

I will not be there for the 125th Anniversary celebration, but I will be there in thought. The Seminole United Methodist Church is wonderful, and Larry and I have happy thoughts from the church. God has blessed the people who benefit from the church. The celebration will be a happy time for all.”--
Blessings, Eldoris (Ellie) Borst

From Dolph Cone:

“My earliest exposure to Seminole Methodist Church (Methodists were not yet United), was in the early 1950’s. At that time I was a member of the other Seminole Methodist Church in the Tampa Bay area (Seminole Heights Methodist Church in Tampa).

I was a member of MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship). It was a custom at that time to go visit other MYF's in the Tampa District. Our group carpoled over to visit with the Seminole Methodist MYF, and they met in what is now our chapel. We parked on the side of the road where the convenience store is now located. All of that area was a citrus grove, and Seminole Boulevard was a two lane road.

My memory was that the Seminole MYF members were very friendly and made our visit very enjoyable. Little did I know that about 10 years later, after I got out of college, that I would be living in Seminole. My late wife and I started attending Seminole Methodist. Soon thereafter, we became members.”