

A Brief History of the West Falmouth United Methodist Church

Methodists began meeting in West Falmouth in 1850 when circuit rider Rev. B. Sherman was invited to preach there by resident James M. Lumbert Of Old Dock Road. This resulted in a number of conversions. Early meetings were held in private homes, and in 1852, services were moved to the old schoolhouse. One pastor was appointed to serve both the East Falmouth and West Falmouth churches from 1854-1856. Originally, there were 22 members.

In 1857, the church organization began preparations for the erection of the first church building. Land was donated, and the building was constructed by local builder, Alvin Cromwell, and was completed and dedicated within the year. The building was a detailed example of the Italianate style of architecture, with arched top doors and windows topped by heavy moldings.

These were hard times, with all struggling to help meet expenses. In 1863, pews were sold to help the financial situation. The owners of the pews occupied their seats every Sunday. By 1871, the church had 46 members with an active group of young people.

This original building served the community until 1900 when a severe, unfixable leak formed in the roof. The Trustees and pastor voted to build a new church. The existing church building was sold, and land was purchased directly across the street. Fred Bowman (611 West Falmouth Highway), grandfather of current members Harriett Crocker and Virginia Landers, was employed as the contractor, with the men of the village donating their time and talents. The new building at 630 West Falmouth Highway was dedicated on July 9, 1901. The original church building still stands at 641 West Falmouth Highway, and was converted into an apartment house.

A special meeting was called on June 12, 1906 to make plans for raising money to pay off the balance of the church mortgage. A committee was formed to canvas the village, and with the help of the church ladies, town residents, and summer visitors, the final payment of \$1760.00 with interest of \$116.90 was made in February, 1907. This event was celebrated with a dinner at which the mortgage was publicly burned.

To help raise money during these days, bean suppers were held in member's homes. They also held what was known as "Tag-Bees". The Ladies Society gathered in the day-time to sew, with the young people coming in the evening to join them in tying on tags. The men of the church helped where they could, chopping wood that had been donated, and working on church repairs. In the winter of 1918, the church furnace was in such bad condition that the church was closed and members met at the Friends Meeting House.

A number of student pastors filled the pulpit during the early 1900's, and there was very little to no money to pay them. However, contributions from various sources kept the church out of debt.

A Centennial celebration was held for 3 days in October, 1959 which included an old-fashioned concert, a historical oral review, photos, and a dedication service.

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Some years it was necessary to share the minister with other parishes, East Falmouth, Cataumet, Woods Hole, and Falmouth.

In the spring of 1963, land which abutted the church property was bought for \$12,500. The existing house on the land was torn down, as it was declared unsafe, and the two shops on the property were operated as a Thrift Shop for more than 20 years by the women of the church. These buildings currently house Eulinda's Ice Cream (named for church member and Harriett Crocker's mother, Eulinda Bowman), and the Village Café.

Although the church has remained small in numbers through the years, we continue with enthusiasm! We appreciate the steadfast souls, past and present who have stuck with this church, and who have mixed work with prayer to bring the church to where it is today.

We thank Virginia Landers for putting this history together.