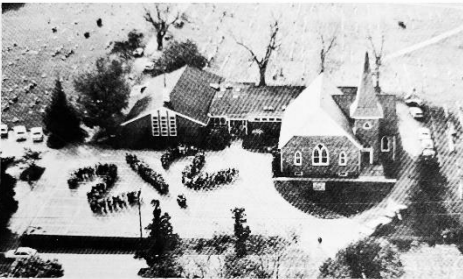


Grove's original deed written on sheepskin.



Architect's design of Grove's "new" addition in 1984



MEMBERS OF the Grove United Methodist Church in West Whiteland Township form the number 212 in front of the church to mark its 212th year of existence in this photo taken from a helicopter last fall. In 1773, Francis Asbury, one of the founders of Methodism in America, held services in a grove of oak trees at the corner of Grove and Boat Roads. The

land was given for a Methodist Church by the owner, Mr. George Hoffman. Grove Church is now in the midst of an \$800,000 expansion program and is one of the fastest growing Methodist churches in eastern Pennsylvania. The Rev. Robert Jones and Barbara Hevley are the pastors.



(above) Newspaper article of Grove's 212-year celebration



GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A HISTORY OF GROVE

Prepared by Church Historian, Kristy Deischer-Eddy

March, 2023



CELEBRATING
250
YEARS
GROVE CHURCH

Praise for the Past... Faith for the Future

490 W. Boot Road | West Chester, PA 19380
grovechurch.org

Grove's Roots **1736 – 1783**

The story of Grove United Methodist Church begins decades before its founding. The formal name of the church and names of the congregants have changed over time, but the purpose has remained the same: to bear witness to the transformative power of Jesus Christ.

1726 – 1735: John Wesley (1703 – 91) and his brother, Charles (1707 – 88), attend Oxford University. In 1729, Charles founded the “Holy Club”, which focused on Bible study, prayer, and helping the poor and those in jail. John applied the method of study put forth in the Statutes of the University to biblical studies, earning John and other members of the Holy Club the nickname “Bible Moths”, and later, “Methodists”. This method of study was not intended to be a new religion, but to be merely a society within the Church of England.

March 1736: John and Charles arrive in Georgia as missionaries for the Church of England, their only visit to America. Charles returned to England in December 1736; John in February 1738.

May 1738: Both brothers had transforming religious moments at a society meeting in London on Aldersgate Street, where John is said to have felt his heart “strangely warmed.” The Methodist movement began to grow in England and spread to the American Colonies.

1771: John Wesley sent Francis Asbury (1745 – 1816) to the colonies. He “became the most important figure in early American Methodism. His energetic devotion to the principles of Wesleyan theology, ministry, and organization shaped Methodism in America in a way unmatched by any other individual.”

Sunday, March 13, 1773: The genesis of what would become Grove United Methodist Church commences on this date when a few settlers gather at the Grove to worship God. The group met at the home of George Hoffman which

was located just over the South Hill (on what we know today as Grove Road) from the Great Valley. "Reverend Francis Asbury had arrived the night before after a long ride out of the new Kings Road (what we now know today as Route 30) that stretched from that great city of Philadelphia to...Lancaster". Also in attendance at this first meeting were Daniel Meredith, up from the Valley near Ship Road, and George Smith, who lived three miles away in Goshen Town. There was Samuel Hoopes, also from Goshen; and Isaac Rollings, who with John King [began] the Methodist movement in Chester County. There are no records of that first meeting. This Methodist Society adopted the name of "Goshen Meeting" and regularly met in the homes of its members.

July 14, 1773: The first Conference of the Methodist Society in the colonies was held in Philadelphia. 10 preachers, 1160 members of the Philadelphia Circuit (all of PA), and 180 reporting members attended this meeting. Among the actions taken were: a pledge of allegiance to Wesley's leadership, an agreement not to administer the sacraments as laypersons, and the creation of a system of regular conferences to conduct the business of the Methodist movement.

1773 – 1783: "The American Revolution [had] a profound impact on Methodism. John Wesley's Toryism and his writings against the revolutionary cause did not enhance the image of Methodism among many who supported independence. A number of Methodist preachers refused to bear arms to aid the patriots.

1774: The Society began to meet in a log school house located in what is now the northwest corner of the cemetery. About this time, the name 'Valley Meeting' was used.

March 31, 1774: Land was purchased for one Shilling Sterling for the Valley Meeting at the corner of what we know today as Boot and Grove Roads.

May 25, 1774: The second conference of the Methodist Society was held. It was decided: "Every preacher who is received into full connection is to have the use and property of his house, which any of the Circuits may furnish him with. Every preacher, known as a 'circuit rider', was to be allowed six pounds Pennsylvania currency per quarter and his traveling charges besides. All the preachers are to change at half the year's end". Grove was served at various times by both the Philadelphia Circuit and the Chester Circuit.

1783: Stone chapel built for Grove Meeting, consecrated by circuit rider John Hagerty. This first house of worship was 30 by 40 feet with 3 doors: north, south and west. "Thus grew the Methodist Society at Grove, sometimes called "Hoffman's Church", but just as likely called "Old Grove".

The Pastors of Grove, 1773 – 1783

- 1773 John King, Isaac Rollins, Richard Webster, Francis Asbury
- 1774 Daniel Rugg, John Yerbry
- 1775 Richard Webster
- 1776 Samuel Spragg
- 1777 Robert Lindsay
- 1779 Joseph Cromwell
- 1780 John Cooper, George Mair
- 1781 William Glendenning, Samuel Rowe
- 1782 William Glendenning, John Cole
- 1783 John Ellis, John Hagerty, Thomas Haskins

Grove's Roots 1784 – 1816

December 1784: The Christmas Conference of preachers was held in Baltimore at Lovely Lane Chapel. This group organized the society movement as The Methodist Episcopal Church in America, renaming Grove Meeting the Grove Methodist Episcopal Church in the process.

1785: The Methodist Episcopal Church published its first *Book of Discipline*. The General Rules adopted in December 1784 are still contained within the *Discipline* today.

1789: The Methodist Book of Concern was organized to supply members, preachers and Sunday schools with Christian literature.

1792: The first quadrennial General Conference was held.

March 23, 1799: Trustees were first elected at Grove on this date.

1800: The Church of the United Brethren in Christ, founded by German Reformed pastor Phillip William Otterbein (1726 – 1813) and Mennonite Martin Boehm (1725 – 1812), was formally organized.

1803: The Evangelical Association, founded by Jacob Albright (1759 – 1808) was officially organized.

1808: A Constitution was drafted, a publishing house was established, and The Methodist Episcopal Church became an ardent proponent of revivalism and the camp meeting.

April 1815: "The interior of Grove Church was redone and a new altar and pews were purchased and installed".

1816: The African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded by Methodist and emancipated slave Richard Allen (1760 – 1831).

March 1816: Francis Asbury dies.

The Pastors of Grove, 1773 – 1783

1784 Leroy Cole, Jeremiah Lambert, Joseph Cromwell
1785 Ira Ellis, James Thomas
1786 Henry Ogburn, Peter Moriarty
1787 Samuel Dudley, William Thomas
1788 Robert Cann, John Milburn
1789 William Daugherty, James Campbell
1790 S. Hutchinson, John Cooper
1791 John McCloskey, Isaac Robinson, Simon Miller
1792 Joseph Lovell, Joseph Wainwright
1793 Robert Cloud, William Hunter, Evan Rogers
1794 William Early, James Smith, Matthew McGee

- 1795 John Jarrell, Thomas Sargent, John Robinson
- 1796 Thomas Bell, Samuel Welsh
- 1797 William Colbert, William Chandler
- 1798 William Chandler, Daniel Higby
- 1799 William Colbert, Edward Larkins
- 1800 Stephen Timmons, Richard Sneath, Thomas Jones
- 1801 William Hunter, John Bethel
- 1803 Anning Owen, William Brandon
- 1804 William Hunter, Stephen Timmons, Robert McCoy
- 1805 Joseph Stevens
- 1806 John Walker, William Early
- 1807 Daniel Ireland, Peter Beaver
- 1808 Asa Smith, John Bethel, William Finney
- 1809 John Walker, William Early
- 1810 Richard Sneath, John Fox
- 1811 Richard Sneath
- 1812 William Fisher, Thomas Dunn
- 1813 William Fisher, John Fernon, Joseph Samson
- 1814 George Sheets, Thomas Miller, Samuel Lewis
- 1815 Asa W. Smith, Joseph Samson
- 1816 William Torbert, John Reed

Methodist Churches Grow 1817 – 1843

The Methodist Episcopal Church, United Brethren, and Evangelicals increased membership dramatically during this time. Local churches sprang up wherever a few men and women were gathered under the direction of a class leader and were visited often by the circuit preacher. “This system effectively served the needs of a city, town, village, or frontier outpost”. Annual Conferences provided the way to admit and ordain clergy, appoint itinerant preachers and supply them with support.

“The Second Great Awakening was the dominant religious development among Protestants in America in the first half of the nineteenth century”. Sinners were brought to conversion through revivals and camp meetings. Circuit riding preachers and lay pastors served these churches.

“Methodists...were urged to avoid evil, to do good and to use means of grace supplied by God”. Wesley stated that there was no place in church membership for “almost Christians”.

1818: Methodist Missionary Society is established. In Ohio, the mission to the Wyandot Indians is established.

1821: The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is established.

April 10, 1822: The American Republican newspaper reported that there would be a “concert at the Grove on May 5th, to which all the amateurs of vocal music are respectfully invited to participate”.

1828: Sunday school was established at Grove.

1833: Turtle Fields becomes the first ordained Native American minister by the Tennessee Conference.

1835: By this date, Sunday schools were encouraged in every Methodist Episcopal congregation where they could be started and maintained.

1839: First Methodist regional historical society founded.

1841: By this time, each of the churches – Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren had started denominational missionary societies. “John Stewart's mission to the Wyandots marked a beginning of the important presence of Native Americans in Methodism”.

1843: “Just before the construction on the Grove Church began, the circuit serving Grove was changed and it became known as [the] Grove Circuit. [It included] the churches of Salem, Charlestown, Valley Forge and St. John's.

The Pastors of Grove, 1817 – 1843

1817 William Hunter, William Torbert
1818 John Goforth, Samuel Budd
1819 John Robertson, Phinehas Price
1820 William Leonhard, Thomas Davis

- 1821 David Bertine, Thomas Davis
1822 David Bartine, John Talley
1823 Thomas Miller, William Allen
1824 Henry Boehm, John Wollson
1825 Henry Boehm, Levin Prettyman
1826 Jacob Bruber, Samuel Grace
1827 Jacob Gruber, William Cooper
1828 Thomas Miller, Eliphalet Reed
1829 Edward Page, Daniel Fidler
1830 Edward Page, Thomas McCarrol
1831 William Ryder, Nathaniel Chew
1832 William Ryder, James Ayars
1833 James Ayars, John Edwards
1834 David Best, Richard Thomas
1835 John Perry, Richard Thomas
1836 William Cooper, Jesse Ford
1837 William Cooper, James Hand
1838 James Ayars, Charles Jackson
1839 James Ayars, Frederick Gram
1840 Henry King, James Neill
1841 Henry King, L.M. Prettyman
1842 George Lacey, Christopher Crouch
1843 Thomas Sumpton, Thomas Murphy

The Slavery Question and Civil War 1844 – 1865

John Wesley and other early American Methodist leaders opposed slavery. The issue of slavery was generally eschewed by the Methodist Episcopal Church until pressed, and it would ultimately split the Church.

1844: At the Methodist Episcopal Church Conference, the slavery issue came to the fore. One of the five bishops, James O. Andrew, had acquired slaves through marriage. The General Conference voted to suspend Bishop Andrew as long as he had slaves. A Plan of Separation was drafted and later adopted to allow Conferences in slave-holding states to separate from the

Methodist Episcopal Church to form the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

1844: Grove's new church was erected by the contractor Thomas Walker of Walkertown (Whiteland Station). "The entrance to the church faced south, and the sanctuary was on the second floor in the style of the churches of the day. Total cost of the church was \$1,829.59, of which \$1,599.75 was paid to Thomas Walker. It was also said that the Church insurance policy was \$2.00 for the year".

December 16, 1844: The dedication for the second church building was held at 10:00 am on this date.

1845: By this time, Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren had instituted courses of study for their preachers to ensure that they had a basic knowledge of the Bible, theology, and pastoral Ministry.

May 1845: The first Methodist Episcopal Church, South was organized in Louisville, KY.

1846: The first General Conference for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was held. There, a new *Discipline* and hymnbook were adopted.

1847: The circuit-riding practice generally gave way to pastors being assigned to local churches.

1853: Beningo Cardenas started preaching the Methodist message in Spanish.

March 17, 1852: The earliest call yet discovered for deaconess as an order in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the issue of *Zion's Herald* published on this date.

1858: Earliest known effort on record for the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in support of foreign missions. A fund-raising effort for missionaries in China was organized by Mrs. M. L. Kelley.

August 1861: Company A of the 97th regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, formed at Camp Everhart on the site of

what is now Everhart Park in West Chester. Grove, as “the little country church” surrounded by farmland, did not reflect the social upheaval raging to the south in Virginia or to the west in Gettysburg (or, more broadly, between northern and southern Methodists).

June 1, 1865: Grove held a special service reflecting on the life of slain President Abraham Lincoln.

The Pastors of Grove, 1845 – 1865

1844	Thomas Sumpton, James Anderson
1845	David Dailey, James Anderson
1846	David Dailey, George Lybrand
1847	Henry Atmore, J.A. Whitaker
1848	Henry Atmore
1849	James Harmer, Stearns Patterson
1850	James Harmer, William Robinson
1851	Joseph Wythes, John Boyd
1852	Joseph Wythes, John Jones
1853	Joshua Turner
1854	Joseph Carlisle
1856	Daniel Patterson
1858	William Burrell
1860	John Shields
1862	George Lybrand
1863	Vaughan Smith
1865	Jerome Lindamuth

Reconstruction, Prosperity, and New Issues 1866 – 1913

During this time, membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church grew fourfold to 4 million. Similar growth occurred for Methodist Protestants, United Brethren, and Evangelicals. Theological seminaries were first established during this time period. Mission work was a high priority – city and Native American missions at home; Asian European, African, and Latin American missions overseas. Missionary societies were formed by women to raise money for these missions. Critical issues under debate in all these churches

included the issue of lay representation in General Conferences and the role of women in both the laity and clergy. Other controversies included the holiness movement, the rise of liberal theology, and the Social Gospel movement. The antecedent denominations of the United Methodist Church were active in the Federal Council of Churches, the first major ecumenical venture among American Protestants.

1866: Methodist Episcopal Church, South membership fell to two thirds of its pre-Civil War numbers.

1866: Maggie VanCott is the first woman in the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) to obtain a local preacher's license.

1867: Grove became a separate station for preaching.

October 12, 1867: The *Jeffersonian* newspaper reported that Grove was remodeled for \$1,800, the funds collected by the end of the first service the previous Sunday.

1870: Methodist Episcopal Church, South voted to transfer their African American members to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (now called the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church).

October 19 – 25, 1873: Grove's centennial was celebrated on Sunday the 19th with a church service and Tuesday the 21st to Friday the 25th with three services each day. Former pastors Boehm (1824 – 25), Murphy (1843), and Smith (1863) preached.

December 12, 1885: Pastor James C. Wood requests that he be replaced, citing lack of volunteer support, inadequate educational facilities for his children, and a dilapidated parsonage.

1887: Japanese layman Kanichi Miyama ordained in California.

January 6, 1888: Hauling of the green serpentine stone for a new church building from Birmingham Township

began. Contract for \$7,000 awarded to Morgan Ruth & R.T. Meredith.

April 29, 1888: The last services were held in Grove's 1844 church building.

June 5, 1888: Foundation is laid for the new church building, to the east of the 1844 church, allowing more room between the church and the cemetery. The 1844 building was razed by this date and services were held in a tent until completion of the new building.

July 26, 1888: Cornerstone is laid for the new church building.

January 14, 1889: Grove's new church is dedicated. The last \$600 in building funds was raised during the services.

1889: The United Brethren General Conference approves ordination for women.

1892: Women delegates were admitted to the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church.

1893: Women delegates were admitted to the General Conference of the United Brethren.

1894: The United Evangelical Church breaks away from the Evangelical Association.

1900: Full laity rights for women granted in the MEC.

1904: Ladies Aid Societies granted recognition by the MEC.

1908: A Social Creed was adopted at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Pastors of Grove, 1866 – 1913

1866	Jerome Lindamuth
1867	Levi Hughes
1869	Stephen Townsend
1871	Samuel Hare
1873	John Kessler
1876	William Fries
1879	John Bailey
1881	William Rink
1884	James Wood
1887	J. Wharton Bradley
1889	George North
1891	John O'Neil
1892	John Bell
1894	W.W. Wisegraver
1896	Mathias Barnhill
1899	George Schaffer
1903	John Priest
1905	Hiram Illick
1907	Harry Petticher
1913	Leo Zook

World War and More Change 1914 – 1939

Post-World War I, a chief concern of the antecedent churches of the United Methodist Church was temperance. Liberal protestant theology, an important school of thought at the time, was questioned both by fundamentalists and neo-orthodoxy. Despite these differences there was continued cooperation with other denominations.

1916: The Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Protestant Church, and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, begin meeting to plan their union.

1917: Pacifism, which arose at the start of World War I, waned.

1918: Grove has 102 members

1918: By the end of the war, 12 members of Grove had enlisted.

1918: The centennial of Methodist Missions is celebrated.

1922: The Evangelical Church is formed.

1922: Women delegates are admitted to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

1923: Grove has 104 members.

September 16 -23, 1923: Grove's 150th anniversary celebrations are held.

1923: The interior of the 1888 church is redone for \$900; the Ladies' Aid Society (precursor to the United Methodist Women) sponsored the installation of electric lights.

1930's: The Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Protestant Church, and Methodist Episcopal Church, South propose six jurisdictions (five geographical and one racial - African American). The Methodist protestants favored union, although it meant accepting Episcopal government (which they had not had since 1830).

1931: Grove's church basement is remodeled by the Ladies' Aid Society for \$1,000.

1932: Grove has 112 members.

1935: The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church work together and publish a joint hymnal.

April 1939: The Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church united into the Methodist Church, with 7.7 million members.

The Pastors of Grove, 1914 – 1939

1914	A. Dwyer
1915	W. Zweizig
1917	J. E. Deacon
1926	J. O'Hara
1928	Frank Mack
1930	Earl Thomas
1934	Russell Hummell
1936	Francis Purcells
1937	Warren Hackman

Movement Towards Union 1940 – 1967

Methodists, Evangelicals, and United Brethren each published strong statements condemning war and advocating peaceful reconciliation among nations, statements which were lost among the American patriotic movement during World War II. As the war ended, the churches worked to help found the United Nations.

1940: First meeting of the Central Jurisdiction

November 16, 1946: The Evangelical Church and the United Brethren Church united to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, the culmination of 20 years of negotiation. Combined membership is 700,000.

1948: The World Council of Churches is founded with the help of both the Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren.

1948: Marked Grove's 175th Anniversary. Celebratory events were held October 3 – 31st. The auditorium was renovated, a section of the basement was excavated, and a new heating system, modern restrooms, and kitchen equipment were installed at a total cost of \$7,500. Most of the funds were raised in cash and pledges before the end of the year. Also new in 1948 at Grove: Weekly worship bulletins

are first distributed, the Youth Choir is organized and choir gowns were purchased, and both the Wesleyan Service Guild and the Men's Brotherhood were organized. Grove membership grew 23% to 232,

April 22, 1949: The first Grove Methodist Brotherhood Minstrel Show opened at West Chester High School (now known as Henderson High School) auditorium. Such shows were held each April for ten years.

1950: The National Council of Churches is founded with the help of both Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren.

1950-51: Grove is without a pastor for a few months during this time, but J. Holland Heck and William Zuschnitt keep the church running.

1951: The World Methodist Council, successor to the Ecumenical Methodist Conferences begun in 1881, was formed.

1956: The Methodist Church grants full clergy rights for women. First to be ordained is Maude Keister Jensen.

1956 – 1966: Proposals were introduced during these years at the General Conference to eliminate the Central Jurisdiction.

December 15, 1958: Bids for the educational building are awarded to Eastern Engineering Company, architect, and Phoenix Building and Construction Company, contractor.

March 15, 1959: Ground-breaking held on Grove's 186th anniversary.

September 13, 1959: First Sunday on which two identical services were held at 8:30 and 11:00 am.

October 12, 1959: Boy Scout Troop 55, sponsored by Grove Men's Brotherhood (now known as the Grove United Methodist Men), is chartered.

November 22, 1959: Educational wing consecrated by Reverends Morris and Charles Phillips (Executive Secretary of

the Conference Board of Education), Dr. J. Vincent Watchom (Superintendent of the West District), and former pastors Harry Irwin III and Howard Huddelson.

1960: The Methodists, Evangelical United Brethren, and seven other protestant denominations form the Consultation on Church Union.

1960: Grove membership reaches 400. The minister's salary was \$4,300 with a \$400 travel allowance. Church assets were valued at \$158,000.

October 2, 1960: The cornerstone for the educational wing was finally laid after two delays (due to a wrong date and because it became home to a bird). Contained within are a copy of the consecration service, lists of Sunday School and church members and those who pledged to the building fund, plus other "surprise items".

1966: The sanctuary is renovated, and carpet is installed.

1967: The last session of the Central Jurisdiction held in Nashville.

The Pastors of Grove, 1940 – 1967

1937 -1940 Warren Hackman
1941 Herbert Richards, John Tindall
1942 Fred Rhody
1943 Harry S. Irwin
1946 F.W. Gutbub
1947 Claus Rohlf
1949 Raymond Tarr
1951 Robert Reed
1952 Paul Austin
1953 Harry B. Irwin III
1957 Howard Huddleson
1959 James Morris

Development and Changes 1968 – 2000

The United Methodist Church was created in 1968, making it one of the largest protestant churches in the world with 11 million members. Membership in Europe and the United States has declined since 1968, but has grown in Africa and Asia. The UMC represents three streams of tradition in Methodism, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and the Evangelical Association.

1968: The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren unite to form the United Methodist Church. The General Commissions on Religion and Race, Archives and History, and Council on Ministries is created.

1968: Grove Preschool is founded, meeting its quota of five students in short order.

1971: United Methodist Women is founded, the more modern version of the Ladies' Aid Society.

1972: First full General Conference of the United Methodist Church is held. This year also marks the end of Central Jurisdiction Conferences, and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is formed.

March 1973: Grove celebrates its 200th Anniversary in services on March 11th and with a bicentennial banquet on March 25th. *Grove United Methodist Church 1773 – 1973* is published.

January 1974: Grove holds its first Pocono Plateau Family Retreat. It is a tradition that continues to this day.

1979: Grove has 700 members

1980: Marjorie Matthews is the first woman elected to the episcopacy.

1982: Grove membership is 950.

1983: Grove's first female pastor, Barbara Housley, begins serving as Associate Pastor.

January 1984: A group from Grove takes a pilgrimage to Israel for two weeks. Side trips to Corinth, Greece and Cairo, Egypt were taken on either side of the trip. Those who went to Egypt experienced a truly unique opportunity – traveling from Jerusalem to Cairo by bus through the Gaza strip.

December 18, 1984: In the year of the United Methodist Church's bicentennial, construction begins on an expansion to Grove. A second floor is added to the educational wing, Memorial Hall is added, and the sanctuary is expanded by 75 seats. To add the new sanctuary seats, the room next to the sanctuary that had been used over the years for various purposes – Sunday School, nursery, and choir rehearsals, was removed. The choir room and Zushnitt Parlor are relocated to the second floor. Brinton's Quarry, the supplier of the green serpentine stone for the 1888 building, is reopened for stonemason Rudy DiRocco to quarry enough stone to accommodate the addition. The architect firm of Siebert, Ferreira & Schlicting of Allentown provided the design.

January 1986: A group from Grove takes another pilgrimage to Israel.

February 18, 1986: The new additions are consecrated, the cornerstone laid, and a celebration dinner held.

1988: Grove has nearly 1200 members. The first Youth Pastor, Pat Obst, is hired. The centennial of the sanctuary is celebrated.

1989: A new hymnal, which includes a new Psalter, revised liturgies for baptisms, the Lord's Supper, weddings, and funerals, is published.

1992: The General Conference authorizes a new *Book of Worship*.

1995: The first Director of Christian Education, Pam Walsh, is hired.

1996: A Spanish language hymnal, *Mil Voces Para Celebrar*, is published.

1996: Plans for sanctuary and Asbury Hall renovations are proposed, but do not move forward.

September 1999: Hurricane Floyd severely damages the last remaining oak tree in Grove's original grove of trees for which the church is named.

2000: A Korean language hymnal, *Come, Let Us Worship: The Korean-English United Methodist Hymnal*, is published.

The Pastors of Grove, 1968 – 2000

1959-1968 James Morris

1970 Paul Dissington, Senior Pastor

1980 Robert Jones, Senior Pastor

1982 Larry L. Light, Associate Pastor

1983 Barbara Housley, Associate Pastor

1987 Alan Brown, Senior Pastor

The New Millennium 2001 – 2013

The United Methodist Church continues to endeavor to be a community in which all persons, regardless of racial or ethnic background, can participate in church life. It has discussed and acted on matters of social importance such as nuclear power, world peace, human secularity, the environment, abortion, AIDS, evangelism and world mission.

September 18, 2001: A special prayer service is held following the events of 9/11.

January 2002: An attempt to launch a building campaign for renovation of Asbury Hall and installation of an elevator is proposed but not approved at Charge Conference.

February 2, 2002: The last tree in the original grove of trees after which Grove church is named, a Black Oak, is taken down at the behest of PennDOT. The tree, despite years of attempted rescue by arborists, had become too badly damaged to remain standing.

March 2002: A smoky fire was discovered to have been started by faulty wiring in a basement restroom sometime between a Friday night and Saturday morning. No one was hurt, but smoke damage affected the entire building and services were cancelled for one week while cleanup began. The organ pipes needed refurbishing, carpet was either replaced or removed entirely throughout the building, and extensive changes were made to the educational wing hallways to lessen the fire risk.

2005: A paradigm shift is made in the church's lay leader structure, as the Administrative Board is reorganized into the Ministry Council, which presides over three areas of Grove's mission: Outreach, Witness, and Nurture. These areas cover all the various work groups, which are asked to lay the groundwork for creating programs and then present them to the Ministry Council for approval, rather than having decisions take up Ministry Council meeting time.

June 2006: Thanks to the efforts of Historians Ivan and Betty Lichty, Grove is approved as United Methodist Historic Site #433 at the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

June 2009: Renovations began on Asbury Hall, including the installation of an elevator and changes to the educational wing first floor restrooms. Asbury Hall is completed in time for the family Christmas dinner in December of 2009.

2010: The Arts at the Grove series is created. A variety of performing groups begin to give concerts and presentations. An inaugural celebration is planned but cancelled due to historic snow.

June 2011: Grove creates the Director of Worship and the Arts staff position. Youth Choir director Charity Harter is selected for the position.

July 1, 2012: Grove's first female Senior Pastor, Bronwyn Yocum, begins her charge.

September 2012: The mortgage for the Elevating Our Ministry campaign is paid in full.

March 17, 2013: Grove celebrates its 240th anniversary with Bishop Peggy Johnson preaching at all three services, cake (of course) at coffee hour, a series of nine educational bookmarks, and a “special” visitor. Plans are made to begin a grove of oak trees anew in April.

The Pastors of Grove, 2001 – 2012

1987 - 2001 Alan Brown, Senior Pastor
1983 - 2001 Barbara Housley, Associate Pastor
2001 Richard Sarley, Senior Pastor
2001 Ruth Woodlen, Associate Pastor
2003 John T. Wright, Senior Pastor
2006 – 2011 Chris Schiavino, Associate Pastor
2012 Bronwyn Yocum, Senior Pastor

And Here We Are 2013 – 2023

Beginning at the turn of the 21st century, but gradually gaining steam in the last 10 years, the divisiveness in the denomination became more apparent with respect to the role of LGBTQ people in the life of the church. Ashley Boggan of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History, one of four authors on the most recent update to the publication “American Methodism,” noted in her chapter entitled, “Polity Pushed to the Breaking Point,” that “when the new millennium began, some bishops expressed (naïve) hope that the ‘debate on homosexuality’ might not continue to divide the denomination but instead might bring ‘us closer together. However, Good News and other conservative caucus groups such as the (Institute on Religion and Democracy) sought to enact punishment for clergy coming out or blessing same-sex weddings.”

By 2019, a special General Conference was called to discuss this division and resulted in the crafting of a disaffiliation process for churches that wished to leave the denomination due to these disagreements. The disaffiliation provision is due to expire at the end of 2023. Since then, about 6.6% of United States congregations (totaling 2,003 churches) have

cleared the necessary hurdles under church law to leave the denomination with property. The vast majority of these are in the Southeastern and South Central Jurisdictions. Yet, 28,500 congregations remain and the denomination remains the second-largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.

The special General Conference did not end the rancor. In early 2020, a diverse group of church leaders unveiled a proposal for amicable separation that would have theological conservatives who support the LGBTQ restrictions leaving with church property and funds to start their own denomination. But COVID caused delays of the regular General Conference from 2020 to 2024, which has kept the plan from being considered and kept the current bans in the Discipline.

Boggan also discussed how the church is keeping up with technology advances, pushed forward most markedly during the COVID-19 pandemic budget cuts; the rise in membership in Africa while U.S. membership declined; and acts of repentance directed at minorities such as Native Americans.

United Methodist Women changed its name to United Women in Faith, but the purpose of supporting the mission remains the same.

Meanwhile, at Grove, there were many changes:

In the last 10 years there have been three changes in leadership of the Youth: Keri McMullin (2014-2016), Deacon Diana Esposito (2016-2022), and now, Mike Hardie, who has led the Youth Choir since 2014.

Deacon Marilyn Schneider has brought her passion for prison ministry to Grove, leading Bible studies, visitations, and coordinating Christmas card signings and clothing collections for inmates in the area.

The Director of Traditional Music saw changes as well—Mike Shoremount from 2014-2019 and Tom Marsden from 2019-present.

The contemporary Arise service was co-led by a variety of people over the years, most recently by Chris Yarnall and Mike Hardie, but continued to feature the praise band, Pieces of One. Chris Yarnall was named the sole Director of Contemporary Worship in 2022.

In 2017 the 8:00 am traditional service was transformed to a weekly communion service, but in the light of declining attendance and trends towards a common Faith Formation hour between services, the 8:00 service was discontinued in favor of a 9:00 am traditional service, a 10:10 Faith Formation hour, and the 11:15 "Arise" contemporary service.

Director of Christian Education Patti Klotz retired in 2018 and was succeeded by Pastor Eva Johnson. Pastor Eva introduced Faith Formation classes and instituted "grace spaces" at both services for children to remain in worship while still being able to engage in quiet play.

Grove Preschool which began in the 1960's is now officially a mission of Grove Church and uses an intentionally Christian curriculum.

Beginning in 2014 Free Community Dinners open to the church and community were held each month, with the exception of the first year of the pandemic.

In 2014 Pastor Lin George extended congregational care to the greater community with the GriefShare® Grief Recovery Program and in 2018 she launched the Our Journey of Hope® Cancer Care Ministry at Grove Church.

In 2018 Pastor Gary Knerr introduced the book "The Class Meeting" inspiring study classes followed by the formation of small groups who meet weekly to discuss their spiritual walk in the Wesleyan tradition. The topic discussed each week is the same – "How is it with your soul?".

One day shy of the 247th anniversary of worship at the Grove, the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown halted all in-person church activities. For several weeks, people were confined at home and all public events were canceled due

to the scope and severity of the fast-spreading disease. This caused all congregations to “pivot” to new ways of worshiping; namely, streaming services online. Grove embraced this new technology quickly.

During the pandemic, the Arise service was reimagined as the “Rooted” service, and by fall 2021, it was the first service to return to in-person worship—outside in the parking lot, socially distanced by family groups. For the traditional service, a few worship leaders and choir members were gradually permitted to slowly return, and in-person services with masked congregants resumed in time for Christmas 2021, after vaccines became more widely available. Streaming worship remains in place, and likely will for years to come, since online worship allows anyone to tune in regardless of geography. Travelers, those serving in the military, college-age congregants and members who are no longer able to worship in person are among those who tune in weekly. The Youth Choir tour was canceled for 2020, reworked as a “local tour” with outdoor concerts for 2021, and returned to the regular tour cycle for 2022.

The Free Little Pantry and Library was dedicated in April of 2021.

A 250th Anniversary Committee was formed in January 2021 to plan monthly celebration services and events for the anniversary year.

In September 2021 Pastors Gary & Lin called the church to prayer in order to navigate a season of discernment following the disruption of Covid. The prayer was prayed by individuals and at all meetings and services through October 2022. The project included preaching, a book study, prayer groups, prayer walks and a 10'x4' banner on the front of the church. “God, may your preferred will break through, change history, usher in and accomplish through us your new hopes, dreams and possibilities both in the life of our church and in our own lives.. We surrender our will for yours in order to fully follow you.”

In October 2022, a simplified leadership model was adopted by the Grove Church conference. A single 9-person group will now provide leadership for the church, rather than having several subgroups that met monthly to report to a larger group.

The Pastors of Grove, 2012 – 2023

2012-2016 Bronwyn Yocum

2016-2023 Gary D. Knerr

2013-2023 Linda (Lin) George. Associate Pastor

Prepared by Church Historian, Kristy Deischer-Eddy with a few edits by Anniversary Committee.