



# FRANCONIA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**6037 Franconia Road, Alexandria, Virginia**

**703-971-5151 | [www.FranconiaUMC.org](http://www.FranconiaUMC.org)**



## **125th Anniversary**

**1896 to 2021 - and Beyond**



## Early History

In 1896, the former Union Church burned and the combined Baptist and Methodist congregations in the Franconia area had no place to worship. This led Mr. Levi Rogers to donate land for a new church, called the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church South. That building still stands at 6731 Beulah Street, and is used today by Mount Calvary Community Church.

The Franconia area was mostly a farming community with few residents, so one minister would serve several churches on his “circuit.” During our first 54 years, we remained part of a circuit and had 21 different ministers. In 1939, the church left the circuit and joined the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Church.

The Franconia community experienced post-World War II growth as farmland gave way to new subdivisions built to accommodate the great influx of families whose children would be known as “baby boomers.” As the community grew, so did the church. In addition to all the activity surrounding the church building projects, men’s and women’s groups were very active. The Women’s Society of Church Service, known today as the United Methodist Women, was started by Mary Inglehart in 1942. Although they were not chartered until 1959, the United Methodist Men originated in 1947 as the Men’s Fellowship and met at Franconia School (corner of Franconia Road and Beulah Street). Franconia School was also available for many church functions, including dinners, pie socials, and other fundraisers to support the church.

## New Location and Construction Boom

In 1945, a church committee began the search for new land and purchased what is now the present church site on Franconia Road from Mrs. Kathie Higham for \$1,500. That spring, the Rev. John Teter conducted the first Sunrise Service on the new property. Three years later, the church name was changed from Bethel to Franconia Methodist Church. The groundbreaking service was held on September 17, 1950.

The low bidder for the building construction was William J. Duvall and his son William H. Duvall, who bid \$23,000. Thanks to donated labor, the final cost was \$18,000. On March 18, 1951 the cornerstone, which included the 125 names of the church members, was laid for the “Basement Building” (now the Stage Room, Small Kitchen, History-Wicker Room, Parlor, Choir Room, and offices). Construction was completed in June 1951 and the congregation moved into the new location that July. The basement was used for worship services until the Sanctuary was completed in 1954; children attended Sunday school in the room behind the stage (which now serves as a storage room). The steeple chimes were first played on September 5<sup>th</sup> and the first service in the new Sanctuary was held on December 12, 1954.



The original church still stands at 6731 Beulah Street in Franconia.



Groundbreaking service, September 17, 1950.

In 1952, the parsonage was constructed to provide housing for a full-time pastor, and in 1953, the Rev. Walter C. Hook, Sr. moved in.

With the community still growing, the church found it necessary to expand the building and programs to meet the growing congregation's needs. In April 1957, the Wesley Building was consecrated for classroom use and a Mother's Day Out program. That program led to the establishment of the Child Life School in September 1957, which operated until Fairfax County began to offer public school kindergarten in 1968.

In 1960, the three-level Cokesbury Building addition was built onto the rear of the Sanctuary, providing needed office space, classrooms, and a large social hall and kitchen for meetings and fellowship events. In 1965, more growth led to the addition of two wings off of the sanctuary. Subsequently, the church office was moved from the Cokesbury Building to the lower wings area. Two more offices and a library were added. The east end of the hall was designated for classrooms. The wings were the sixth building project in the 16 years since the groundbreaking of the Basement Building.

With a membership of 700, the congregation became a United Methodist Church in 1968, the result of the union of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in the United States.



Parsonage (left) and church, 1953.



Church with wings and Cokesbury Building, ca 1970.

## Creating Space for Serving the Community

Some very important traditions started in the 1960s that still continue today. On December 23, 1962, the Chancel Choir presented their first Christmas Cantata, "Born a King." In September 1963, an Alcoholics Anonymous group began hosting meetings in our church building, a tradition that carries on to today with Narcotics Anonymous meetings. Additionally, around 1966, the Koinonia (pronounced "Coin-ah-KNEE-ah") Foundation moved into the basement of the church, just off the Stage Room. Beginning with a limited ability to supply emergency food and clothing, this faith-based organization has grown to also provide assistance with housing, employment, and educational programs to those in need in the Franconia community. In the late 1970s, the Koinonia Foundation moved into the Wesley Building, where it still operates today.

Also in the late 1960s and early 1970s, we sponsored one of our own members who became a full-time United Methodist missionary, Karen Adams, daughter of members Winston and Helen Adams. Adams served in Papua, New Guinea. During this same time, the United Methodist Men began a community tradition with the hosting of their Annual Easter Egg Hunt, which continues to this day.

In 1975, a devastating fire damaged the Sanctuary, destroying the new organ and the round stained-glass window in the chancel area. Church services were held in Cokesbury



Original chancel window.



Hall for seven months until the Sanctuary was restored. The nearby Olivet Episcopal Church provided space for weddings and special events during this time. Because the repairs were almost entirely covered by the church's insurance, the congregation expressed our gratitude to God by collecting a Love Offering of approximately \$5,000, which was presented to the Bishop and divided among missions and other projects, including the Koinonia Foundation.

## Growing in Spirit and in Body

The Franconia UMC congregation was deeply moved when the United Methodist Church's 1976 Annual Conference in Hampton, Virginia, approved the following statement:

*"That churches be urged to accept pastors, associate pastors, and other staff members without regard to race or sex."* In response, in July 1976

Franconia's Pastor Parish Relations Committee adopted the statement as a goal for the following year, and the resolution was also adopted at the charge conference conducted by the District Superintendent. In 1978, Franconia UMC welcomed its first minister of color, the Rev.

Godfrey Tate. In this cross-cultural appointment, Rev. Tate came to an all-white congregation and served for five years, the first time an all-white church in the Southeastern Jurisdiction had a minister of color serving.



The Rev. Godfrey & Mrs. Margo Tate

In the 1980s, Franconia UMC continued its building projects. Two classrooms in the lower east wing were combined to form The Parlor. This room continues to meet the needs of wedding parties in addition to providing a space for meditation and small group meetings. Two classrooms across from The Parlor were combined to become the Choir Room. In 1988, the house and property (part of the original Kathie Higham estate) adjoining the parsonage was purchased. Franconia UMC also expanded its adult education program by starting Disciple Bible study classes, led by the Rev. Hugh Paschall and member Frankie Todack.

During the 1990s, families participated in annual multigenerational spring retreats at Camp Highroad, the Alexandria and Arlington Districts of the United Methodist Church's camp in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Members also participated in a coed, county award-winning softball team, *The Flames*, which provided both fun and fellowship. Other unique activities included the Rev. Ken Jackson leading members of the congregation on a tour of the Holy Land, and the Rev. David Manner and member Tom Bee introducing the church to *A Walk to Emmaus*, a special retreat that focused on spiritual development.

In September 1993, Franconia's leadership agreed to begin an outreach mission to the young families in our community with the creation of a weekday preschool program called "Parents' Day Out." There were 24 students that first year. In 1994, the program expanded to a 4 day a week preschool, and the name was changed to "All God's Children Weekday Program," which continues to fill an important need for Christian preschool education in our community.



Franconia UMC celebrated its centennial in September 1996. A celebratory service was held which featured special music. Several former pastors returned to jointly preach the sermon. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors awarded the church a plaque of accomplishment.

Beginning in the mid-1990s and lasting several years, the church underwent beautification efforts that focused on both the exterior and interior of the church buildings and grounds. Outside, members Barbara Rankin and Sue Cole led the effort to clear out brush and generally reinvigorate the landscaping on the

church's property. Inside, member Margaret Welch (granddaughter of Levi Rogers, who donated the land for the original church) spearheaded the work to refurbish the interior of the entire church building, beginning in the classrooms and ending with the Sanctuary. Structural changes, painting, carpeting, new furniture, and cabinets made the building both esthetically beautiful and more serviceable.

One significant aspect of the interior beautification effort was the installation of 12 new stained-glass windows in the Sanctuary in 2000. The symbols and pictures from the life of Jesus depicted in the windows were selected to portray three themes: *Central Christian Doctrines*, *Who We Are as a Church*, and *What We the Church Do Together*. Donations also allowed the church to add a large chancel window, replacing the one destroyed in the 1975 fire.



Chancel window, 2000.

The growth of the United Methodist Men and the United Methodist Woman allowed for the support of increased mission work both locally and around the world. The United Methodist Men supported the efforts of groups that helped the developmentally and physically challenged through Heart Havens Ministry and Camp Rainbow. Their work with the Alexandria District's United Methodists Volunteers in Mission group led the church to send several individuals to Russia to help with building projects. The United Methodist Women supported a variety of organizations, many of which are still supported by the membership of Franconia UMC, such as the Koinonia Foundation and the Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church (serving the lost, the least, and the left out in southern Fairfax County). The church's youth group also has consistently participated in mission projects, taking annual trips to locations around the U.S. and providing manual labor to communities most in need.

The 2000s saw many new developments at the church, both good and bad. In 2006, the lower level of the church experienced a very severe and costly flood caused by heavy rains and a drainage issue. The flood unfortunately destroyed carpets and many important documents, but that did not slow down our outreach to the community. That year we expanded our worship activities to include a Watch Night Service on New Year's Eve, allowing attendees to prayerfully begin the New Year together. Historically, Franconia UMC is the only church in the area to offer this service. In 2008, a record achievement for Franconia was its 18-member confirmation class! The following year, Franconia UMC lived up to its reputation of being a place "where there are no strangers" with the awarding of the *Welcoming Congregation* designation by the Igniting Ministry Team of the United Methodist Communicators, a recognition given only to churches who show an active program to intentionally receive newcomers.

## Expanding into the Community

Our ministry entered an exciting new phase in 2013. That fall, we started a number of beloved traditions that continue today, such as our annual turkey dinner (the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving). The first Sunday of Advent is now the annual "Hanging of the Greens" service, which blesses the Chrismon tree and those attending prepare their hearts for the coming of the King.



Community members line up for the Franconia turkey dinner.

2013 also saw our first “A Night in Bethlehem,” which is a church-wide effort providing an interactive experience for community attendees to experience the excitement of the town of Bethlehem on the night our Savior was born. This has become a beloved annual tradition, with first-century shops that families can visit on their way to the stable to see a living nativity.

The fall of 2013 ushered in a new era of community communication with the installation of our electronic sign. This technology allows us to interact with the community and offer information on upcoming events.

## Contemporary Worship Arrives, Outreach Expands

In 2015 an important aspect to our ministry was the start of hosting contemporary worship, supported by our newly-created praise band. 2015 also saw our annual Fall Family Festival become a “Trunk-or-Treat” that today regularly welcomes more than 250 community children in an array of costumes to trick-or-treat and enjoy games and crafts on our church grounds.

In 2018, our church adopted our new logo to better communicate our identity as a multi-generational, Christ-centered community in the Franconia/Kingstowne area. We also started an annual tradition on each World Communion Sunday where we package between 10,000 and 20,000 meals with the Methodist-related nonprofit, Rise Against Hunger. These meals are then shipped to communities in need throughout the world.

Franconia also started our Race & Faith small group in 2018 in order to educate and address the issues of race and faith in the church and the community. Franconia UMC believes that if we are truly followers of Christ, we must be better at celebrating, accepting, and appreciating one another’s differences, along with our similarities. Echoing many of these sentiments, in 2019 the Franconia UMC Council adopted the following welcoming statement to ensure that our community knows that we love and value everyone:

At Franconia United Methodist Church, We:

- *believe that everyone is a child of God.*
- *welcome all people to worship, join in membership, serve in lay leadership, and actively participate in the life of the church.*
- *welcome and affirm all persons without regard to gender, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, faith tradition, age, marital status, family structure, economic background, political affiliation, physical or mental ability or life experience.*
- *commit to extend Christ’s hospitality, creating a place of safety and sanctuary for all people.*
- *recognize there are differences among us and although we may not think or look alike, we commit to respect and love one another as we are all the family of God.*
- *further commit ourselves to loving acts of invitation, hospitality, and community, providing ministry to, for, and with all persons without exception, fostering a sense of belonging where people are respected and valued as beloved children of God.*



Welcome to “A Night in Bethlehem.”

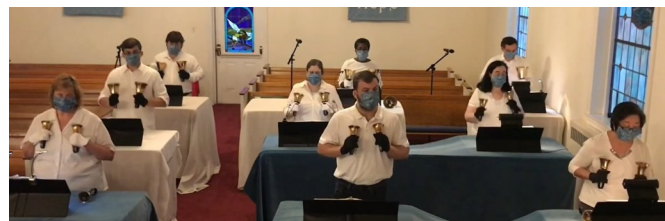


Franconia’s Rise Against Hunger volunteers packaged 20,000 meals on Oct. 3, 2021



In 2020, we sought to foster our members' spiritual growth by adopting a new Adult Discipleship Plan with three parts: Belonging to the Body of Christ, Becoming Like Jesus, and Being Christ in the World. In addition, we also developed a Children and Youth Discipleship Map, creating rites of passage for our children and focusing on key learning objectives.

Like others in 2020, Franconia UMC struggled with the challenges presented by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Our church adapted and now we are able to live-stream our services, thereby increasing our reach.



The handbell choir, masked and socially distanced (COVID-19 pandemic).

### **Who We Are Today**

We are a church that loves to praise God through music. Music has been an essential part of our worship services and church life since the chimes were first installed in the church in 1954. Today, we have multiple musical groups for all ages and talents, including our Chancel Choir, the Wesley Singers, Bells of Praise (adult handbells), Grace Notes (children and youth handbells), and Children's Chimes choir. Each week, the music ministries add such beauty to our services.

We are a church that believes that teaching and nurturing the children and youth are investments in the future. We offer a wide variety of programs and events, such as our weekly Kingdom Kids and Thursday Night Live youth meetings, that are designed to provide a fun and safe environment for them to explore their faith and grow in their roles as disciples of Jesus.

We are a church that deeply believes it is vital to know God better through study and discussion in small groups. As we have throughout our entire history, Franconia UMC continues to host several small group studies, including our Span of Ages class on Sunday mornings, Monday evening Bible study, S.A.L.T. Wednesday morning classes, and our monthly Race and Faith meetings. Through studying God's Word together, we can better fulfill our goals of emulating Jesus Christ and bringing his love with us out into the world.

Lastly, we are a church that believes in helping others. Missions work has formed an integral part of our church life over the years. Today, this work is spearheaded by the NOW Committee (Nurture, Outreach, and Witness) and consists of activities such as making and delivering meals to the homeless and food insecure with Phoenix Rising, donating food to Rising Hope and Koinonia, and partnering with local elementary schools to conduct toy and gift card drives at Christmas and to distribute pantry items to cover families in need during school breaks. Through our mission work, we have praised God by loving and helping others.

We are a church that believes we are all part of God's family. We thank you continuing the tradition of service to the Franconia and Kingstowne communities by your support of Franconia UMC. Your presence at worship, your prayers, your gifts, and your witness all allow us to face the coming years secure in the promise that our church will continue to be a welcoming and safe place where all of God's children will come together.

*- November 14, 2021*



## Pastors Who Served, 1896-2021

### BETHEL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH

1896-1897	Reverend Aaron Mundy
1897-1898	Reverend Robert Chew
1898-1900	Reverend A.D. Snedgar
1900-1901	Reverend J.E. Allendar
1901-1902	Reverend Cornelius Horn
1902-1903	
1903-1904	Reverend J.A. Shuler
1904-1905	Reverend E.B. Catlin
1905-1907	Reverend U.W. Landstreet
1907-1909	Reverend William Pierpont
1909-1912	Reverend R.M. Bartlett

#### *1912 - Joined Baltimore Conference*

1912-1914	Reverend B.S. Harrison
1914-1917	Reverend Edmund Gwynn Cole
1917-1921	Reverend Harry G. Marsh
1921-1925	Reverend J.W. Seay
1925-1929	Reverend J. Calvin Dugger
1929-1934	Reverend W.H. Gray
1934-1938	Reverend Arthur L. Hunter

#### *1939 - Joined Virginia Conference*

1938-1944	Reverend Stuart Monroe Iglehart
1944-1946	Reverend Edward C. Plunkett
1946-1947	Reverend Lloyd C. Moore
1947-1951	Reverend John Teter

#### *1951 - Moved from Beulah Street Building to Franconia Road*

### FRANCONIA METHODIST CHURCH

1951-1956	Reverend Walter C. Hook, Sr.
1956-1963	Reverend Richard G. Pullen
1963-1965	Reverend William L. Asher
1965-1969	Reverend Thomas Y. Lovern

### FRANCONIA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1969-1972	Reverend Wilton E. Allen
1972-1977	Reverend Alfred L. Eastman
1977-1982	Reverend Godfrey L. Tate, Jr.
1982-1988	Reverend Hugh C. Paschall
1988-1990	Reverend Harry L. Kidd, Jr.
1990-1994	Reverend Kenneth J. Jackson, Jr.
1994-2004	Reverend David E. Manner, Jr.
2004-2006	Reverend Teresa S. Smith
2006-2012	Reverend Vernell M. Carter
2012-2017	Reverend Catharine T. Guest
2017-Present	Reverend Melissa D. Porter-Miller



Circuit Rider tapestry created by  
member Marian Millstead

## Franconia UMC Through the Years . . .



Construction of main sanctuary, completed church building (1954), Wesley Building (currently houses The Koinonia Foundation)



Children's Sunday School, Combined Choirs, *Franconia Flames* Softball Team



Christmas Cantata, All-Church Weekend at Camp Highroad





# Franconia UMC Through the Years . . .

Easter Egg Hunt, Children's Christmas Pageant



The Living Last Supper (Holy week dramatic presentation)



Trunk or Treat, Youth mission trip attendees



Old sign, current sign, screen capture of live stream of worship



## Acknowledgements

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