

# A History of the Methodist Church of Sudbury



MASSACHUSETTS

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**M**ethodism in America dates from a conference held in Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore, Maryland, on December 24, 1784. At that time, however, there were few, if any, Methodists in New England. This was the last section of America to be entered by Methodist itinerant preachers, most of whom came from England. Jesse Lee was appointed to the Stamford, Connecticut, circuit in 1789, and the first Methodist Society in New England came into being in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1791. Prior to that date, there were no permanent places of worship, no groups or societies. The pastors preached in courthouses, barns, private homes, even taverns, and they attracted crowds by singing and praying.

Sudbury was the second town formed in Massachusetts. During colonial times, only Salem was larger. Even during the Revolutionary War, Sudbury was the largest town in Middlesex County and was considered the “mother town” of the area. Wayland, Natick, Cochrasset, Framingham, Marlborough, Grafton, Hudson, Maynard, Stow, Rutland and even Worcester grew from the “mother town,” according to Hudson’s book, *The History of Sudbury*.

## **Beginning of Methodism in Sudbury**

Church going was a very important part of personal life in Sudbury during its first 150 years. Sunday church attendance was mandatory, and all church business was conducted at town meeting. In the 1800s, a rift began to form in the Congregational Church, which had been the center of social and political life for so long. It was the Unitarian movement that first divided Sudbury's original congregation, when a majority of that church's members embraced the new Unitarian theology. A handful of Trinitarians left and formed what is now Memorial Congregational Church in south Sudbury.

Although only two persons in Sudbury claimed to be Methodists prior to 1823, The Reverend Erastus Otis from the "Old Brick Church" in Marlborough formed a class in that year. Meetings were held in the Northwest School house (located near the Maynard-Sudbury line at Route 27) until Sudbury voted in 1835 to prohibit the use of schools for religious meetings. The class moved to the home of Walter Haynes. Soon Emerson Brown solicited aid for the erection of a meeting house. Some of the contributors were Emerson Brown, Edwin Cutting, Isaac Parmenter, Marshall Rice, Noah Smith, Amos Hagar, Solomon Weeks, and Martin Brown.

On September 19, 1835, a deed was conveyed from Luther Goodnow for \$125 for the purchase of a piece of land at Sudbury town center, across from First Parish, measuring sixty rods. Erected and dedicated in 1836, the new Methodist church was in what was called the Needham Circuit. Initially, about fifty persons were converted to Methodism, bringing the membership to seventy-five. E.O. Haven, who later became a bishop, taught school in the vestry. One of the worshippers, L. P. Frost, later became a minister, and Charles Rogers, a presiding elder in the new Sudbury church, later became one of its pastors. Early church members included family names familiar to us now: Noyes, Parmenter, Haynes and Goodnow.

In 1837, the conference sent the Reverend Elias C. Scott to be the Sudbury Methodist Episcopal Church's first full-time pastor at a salary of \$325.55 per year. A church bell was purchased in 1841 for \$303.25, mostly from a gift of Edwin Cutting. This same bell now rings in our present steeple.

In 1893, the meetinghouse was remodeled with a corner tower erected and cathedral glass windows installed at a cost of \$2,350. The meetinghouse assumed its current familiar shape when it was rebuilt and enlarged in 1896 on the same site. We know it today as the Presbyterian Church of Sudbury at the town center.

In 1911, a colonial home, part of the George Goodnow estate and located on Old Sudbury Road on the opposite side of the street from the present church, was bequeathed by Georgianna Goodnow to the Trustees of the Methodist Church to be used as a parsonage. The Methodist church used the property until 1945, when it was sold to the Stearns family.

The eighty-fifth anniversary of the introduction of Methodism in Sudbury was observed on October 4, 1908, with a historical sermon by George H. Clarke, pastor, special music by a large chorus, and a Sunday School celebration. On Tuesday evening, October 6, there was a reunion and informal reception with a banquet. Addresses by invited guests and former pastors, as well as songs, made for a memorable evening. Pledges were also received canceling the debt of \$1,000, which had been carried along since the rededication of the church edifice.

In 1915, the Ladies Benevolent Society became the Ladies Aid Society and was later called the Women's Society for Christian Service or W.S.C.S. It is now known by the name United Methodist Women. By whatever name, this group has rendered great service, fellowship and outreach.

In October, 1923, the church observed its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with special music and sermon. On Wednesday, October 24, a reception and banquet were held in the evening with Bishop Edwin H. Hughes D.D. as the guest of honor. He delivered an inspirational address, the first time that a bishop had spoken in this church.

In 1938, the name of the church changed from Sudbury Methodist Episcopal Church to Sudbury Methodist Church. This change accompanied the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church to form the Methodist Church. The merger healed some of the division caused by differences over slavery, but did not include the predominantly black branches of the Methodist Church.



Beginning in 1934 and continuing through 1959, Sudbury was an outpost church, first to the Methodist church in Saxonville, then to Marlborough, and later to the church in Maynard. The same pastor was in charge of both churches, delivering the sermon on Sundays to each at different times and doing his other pastoral duties for both churches during the week. This arrangement caused much friction and disagreement. In a letter written in May, 1959, the pastor recommended to the district superintendent that Sudbury have its own pastor. He observed that he was giving the Sudbury church more services than they were paying for, and this was still less than Sudbury was demanding. At that time, Maynard was paying \$3,800 and providing a parsonage, while Sudbury was paying only \$2,000 per year. Besides the bickering with the sharing churches, there had been both financial and attendance problems. During the war years, gas rationing made it difficult for some members to attend services. On more than one occasion, the pastor had to wait an additional week for his salary, until the W.S.C.S. food sale could come through with his money.

### **A Vision for the Future Church**

After a hurricane damaged the church in 1954, the members' initial thought was to use the insurance money to enlarge the structure. At this time, Sudbury Methodist Church had only 50 members, and Sudbury itself had a population of less than 3,000. Despite this reality, two men envisioned a bright, flourishing future for the church, one which would require space, lots of space.

In 1955, through the vision of Reverend Robert K. Jones and L. Roy Hawes, who had been Sunday School superintendent and lay leader for almost thirty years, a building committee began to look into land for a new church site. The committee, chaired by Mr. Hawes, conferred with William and Ella Davison about the purchase of their lots on Old Sudbury Road and eventually bought three lots, two consisting of four acres for \$5,000 and one lot of three acres for \$4,500.

In March, 1957, Edward Melville Bridge of Wakefield, architect of colonial churches, agreed not only to submit plans, but to accept a reduced fee and allow church members to work on the construction.

The project consisted of three phases, construction of Sunday School classrooms, followed by the parish hall, and concluding with the sanctuary and parsonage construction. The total project would take seven years to complete.

### **A Tradition of "Do-it-Yourself" Construction Begins**

From the start it was decided that not only would the church act as its own contractor, but the people would also build the church with their own hands and pay for it as the bills were incurred. Because of the great talents, unfailing loyalty, and enormous energy of member George Adams, the do-it-yourself project was possible. Mr. Adams was a home building contractor who agreed to a small salary for the duration of the project and, in turn, oversaw the work, taught the members what to do, and followed up by correcting their mistakes.

On April 2, 1957, ground was broken for the Sunday school wing, with Bishop John Wesley Lord officiating. This construction was completed, dedicated, and in use by the end of 1957. A second fund raising followed, and work continued on the parish hall (later named Hawes Hall) and the parsonage.

The parish hall was completed and dedicated by Bishop James K. Mathews on April 15, 1961. During the next year the grounds were landscaped, the pond was dredged, and final plans for the sanctuary were approved. Work began in the spring of 1962, and the cornerstone was laid by Bishop Mathews on September 30, 1962. The sanctuary was completed on March 1, 1963.

When it was all finished, the church had a \$4.5 million complex with only a \$55,000 debt. During the construction, as though to fulfill L. Roy Hawes' vision, church membership grew eight times its 1955 membership. By building the church themselves, church members saved approximately \$500,000 in labor costs. The only jobs which were contracted out were black-topping the parking lot (a \$10,000 job and the largest expense), plastering, and electrical work, which was required by law. Some 150 men and women built the church, with crews averaging about twenty.

Many happy coincidences occurred during the construction. When concrete forms were to be installed, a leading form builder moved into the community and made himself available. When the steel engineering work was to begin, out of the blue came a structural steel engineer who took charge. Tractors and bulldozers made their appearances on the site and were used without charge. A skilled mason in the congregation presided over stone and block work.

On January 4, 1964, Cardinal Richard Cushing, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese in Boston, spoke in the new sanctuary, the first time a Cardinal had spoken in a Protestant Church.

Another example of the new church's interfaith spirit can be seen by its welcome in 1962 to Congregation Beth El who held their services here until their synagogue was completed in 1969. The pair of candelabra which we use in the chancel is a gift from Beth El.

In October, 1973, the church celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Methodism in Sudbury by honoring L. Roy Hawes, George Adams and others who had been instrumental in building the new church. The parish hall was named for L. Roy Hawes at that time.

On January 12, 2014, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley preached at an ecumenical service at SUMC in commemoration of Cardinal Richard Cushing's historic visit fifty years earlier.

### **Return the Gift**

In 1980, after twenty-four years of constant use, the time came for the church to embark on a major renovating effort to redecorate and make better use of available space. Sue Kuykendall headed up a "Return the Gift" committee. The idea was to carry on the tradition of the original do-it-yourself builders and to provide the funds for such renovation. All-church garage sales in the parking lot, time and talent auctions, progressive dinners, and other money-making ideas were utilized, including bookmarks made and sold by the second grade Sunday school class. Over 100 people helped refurbish Sunday school rooms under the sanctuary, created two new youth rooms where the automated bowling alleys had been, provided a church school office, and expanded the library. Vinyl siding and storm windows were added, Hawes Hall redecorated, and repairs made to the steeple and parking lot.

### **Davison Chapel**

October 2, 1982 was a banner day at SUMC as ground was broken for an expanded Davison Room, which could be used for small weddings and funerals as well as an all-purpose meeting room. The addition was designed by music director, John Harper. The construction, organized by Jeanne Kraut, was once again undertaken by the members. The 36' x 24' chapel is of post-and-beam construction with wooden-pegged, hand-chiseled joints. A ten-foot-high cross made of 268 pieces of stained glass hangs in front of the cathedral window on the end wall. The cross was designed and created by Trish Hendershot, a former member of SUMC. Davison Chapel, named for William and Ella Davison, the former owners of the land on which the church was built, was dedicated on September 25, 1983.

In October, 2008, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the Davison Chapel during and following the Sunday morning service.



Jeanne Kraut, John Harper



### **Build a Vision Campaign**

On May 20, 1996, ground was broken for another huge addition to our growing church. Under the leadership of Dave Fitts, money was contributed by the congregation and Sunny Hill Preschool for the two-phase construction led by George O'Reilly. On May 20, ground was broken for the first phase of construction: new Sunny Hill classrooms (also used for Sunday School) and offices, handicap-accessible lavatories, and new access to the sanctuary basement. One of our members, Don Morris, a professional contractor, did the excavation work. Once again members volunteered to complete a good part of the labor. The new rooms were dedicated in September, 1996. Seven months later, ground was broken for phase two: construction of a new choir room, sacristy, new church offices, handicapped access way, elevator, and an all-purpose room. On May 10, 1998, the new construction was dedicated, and the all-purpose room was named in George O'Reilly's honor. Because of the donated labor, we were able to fund several outreach projects, including \$10,000 toward construction of a Habitat for Humanity home in Boston.



Floyd Stiles, George Adams, George O'Reilly

## **Family Retreat**

In September, 1968, the first all-church family retreat was held at Camp Aldersgate, Scituate, Rhode Island. One hundred rain-soaked souls pitched tents or settled in cold cabins for campers for a weekend of fellowship and worship. From this small beginning, the retreats grew, moving to Geneva Point Conference Center in Moultonboro, New Hampshire for twenty three years and to Pilgrim Pines Conference Center in Swanzey, New Hampshire for sixteen years. In 2009 and 2010, shorter retreats were held at Grotonwood Conference Center in Groton, Massachusetts. Since 2011, an annual church picnic has been held in June so that families can get together, get acquainted and continue the tradition. These retreats have nourished many church friendships and given a strong start to many plans for the church year.

## **A Beautiful Sound Unto the Lord**

On October 6, 1963, the electronic three-manual organ in the Sudbury United Methodist Church was dedicated with a recital by Reginald Foort, internationally-known organist and composer. With fifty-six independent speaking stops and four percussion voices, the organ was the largest Baldwin organ in any church at that time. Like most things, “old Baldy” eventually wore out.

In 1974, under the leadership of Paul Weiss, a new organ committee was formed. Mechanical design of the new organ was an enormous engineering challenge, with very little space available for a tracker key-action pipe organ. Although much of the 1974 organ was new, including the two-manual case, it did contain many recycled parts from older organs. Some portions were from an 1871 Holland Labagh organ built for the Marquand Chapel at Princeton University and later moved to the chapel of the Bowery Mission, New York City. The new organ was completed by the Stuart Organ Company, Aldenville, Massachusetts, at a cost of \$56,000, of which only \$16,000 was borrowed. Following our hands-on construction tradition, church members undertook the necessary building modifications, such as enlarging the pipe chamber and finishing work. The organ has since undergone major repairs in 1993 and a complete renovation in 2000.

Choir and organ performance have always been a vital part of the Sunday service. The quarterly Connexions Concerts give talented church members and friends an opportunity to take part.

### **Care and Feeding of Members**

Through our history this church has tried to heed the United Methodist call for open hearts, open minds, and open doors. We welcome all who seek to grow in an understanding of and a response to the whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In recognition of the diversity of our community, SUMC approved the following Reconciling and Welcoming Statement in 1990:

*The United Methodist Church is a community of believers and seekers, with differences in age, class, nationality, race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, abilities, and limitations. We at SUMC recognize that there are attitudes, concerning these diverse characteristics, which violate the integrity of individuals and deny the richness of God's creation. Therefore, we affirm our welcome to all people into our community of faith. We are committed to be a fellowship in which all persons feel a part of our family, enabling them to grow in their faith, to be fed by our fellowship, and to contribute their talents to the life of the church in its worship, programs, and outreach. We call the church and society to be sensitive to all persons and to advocate programs which attempt to ensure justice for all.*

The church became an official Reconciling Congregation in 2004.

Our membership is around 500 and is made up of folks from many surrounding towns as well as Sudbury. There are also many loyal friends who attend our church and take part in its work but who are not officially members. A significant characteristic of our church is the high level of commitment of time and energy shown by its active members and friends.

Groups active within the congregation are the Bridge Group, Women's Fellowship, Men's Discussion Group, and Magic Years for retirees.

There are various opportunities for fellowship during the year including get-togethers with Greenwood UM, potluck suppers, Advent and Lenten suppers, and the annual Barn Sing in December and the annual church picnic in June. There is a weekly Faith Walk during the fall and spring, as well as an annual Lenten booklet with contributions from our members. There are four Connexions Concerts throughout the year with musical contributions by SUMC members as well as other friends.

### **Caring Networks**

Caring Networks were established in 1990 to provide support for families or individuals on a short-term basis. An illness in the family, hospitalization, death, or the birth of a new baby are situations where we could offer meals, transportation, food shopping, prayers, cards or just a friendly phone call.

There are twelve Caring Networks based on geographical neighborhoods or entire towns. Each network has between seven and thirty families.

An unusual example of members caring for each other occurred when the home of Chris Rose, a long-time member, was destroyed by fire in 1990. Largely through the efforts of Don Akin, Floyd Stiles and Lyn MacLean, her home was rebuilt.



**Stephen Ministry** — In August, 1982, Sue Kuykendall, Alice Vannerson, Peg Whitely, Don Akin and Pastor David Purdy traveled to Baltimore to be trained as Stephen Leaders. Upon their return, they recruited and trained ten of our church lay persons in a fifty-hour training program. Stephen Ministers supplement our pastors' ministry by providing one-on-one care to people in need. Over the years, subsequent training continues to add new Stephen Ministers. Many people have received care through this ministry.

The **Social Justice Commission** calls the congregation to take action on issues of hunger, homelessness, racism, climate change, gambling and equal rights for LGBT persons through programs, projects, invited speakers and *Chronicle* articles.

**Membership and Community Life** welcomes new members and cares for all the membership through the Caring Network. The Commission plans for Advent and Lenten suppers, Men's Breakfast meetings, Magic Years luncheons for seniors, and Sunday morning greeters and Sunday morning coffee hour.

The four foci of the **Health Ministry Commission** are proclamation, spiritual development, fellowship and outreach, and has included delivering fresh produce to a family shelter and to senior housing, providing refreshments after the Blue Christmas service, a Health Fair, classes about mental illness, and the prayer shawl ministry, as well as delivering health information to the congregation. There is a Cancer Support group which meets on the third Wednesday of the month.

The **Worship and Music Commission** coordinates support ministries for worship that is planned by others. Behind the scenes support is given for the acolyte program, ushers, flower committee, communion stewards, choir and choir special programs, and Connexions concerts.

The **Finance Commission**, in close cooperation with the Business Manager and Staff Parish Committee, is responsible for the financial health of SUMC. The success of their effort directly affects the spiritual program activity within the church and the expansion of outreach beyond the church walls. They determine the budgets of all active committees and commissions.



The **Trustees** are responsible for the provision and upkeep of the church and grounds as well as two parsonages. Their ability to accomplish this is governed by setting applicable goals, determining long-term versus short-term needs, and planning what can be done with Finance Committee funding.

The **Education Commission** plans Christian Education which takes many forms at SUMC and continues to be available to all ages.

On Sunday morning, there is nursery care available in the room above the narthex. Children sit with their parents until after the Children's time in the service when they depart for music and learning. The 3-5 year olds meet separately. The six year olds through 5<sup>th</sup> graders begin with joint music and worship and split within the space of Hawes Hall to creative, age-appropriate programming. There is a Grapple Group for 6,7, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. All children return to the church service to participate in communion. There is also the God Squad for Senior High Youth which meets at various times.

It is a pleasure to witness youth development through SUMC programs starting with their early participation in Holy Communion, gaining confidence as acolytes, assisting in usher duties, participating in the Christmas pageant and the church music programs, gaining confidence through confirmation study and Youth Sunday participation.

Educational opportunities are varied and available throughout the year for adult Christian education including Disciple Bible Study. Groups have met at the church, in homes, in coffee shops, on the walking trails, and on line.

**Greenwood Memorial United Methodist Church** – In 1991, our church, under the leadership of the Rev. Richard Harding and the Rev. David Purdy, formed a linkage with the Greenwood Memorial United Methodist Church of Dorchester. Through joint suppers, retreats, worship services and Bible study, the churches have helped each other. We have also been supportive of Greenwood's Shalom Tutoring and Summer Enrichment Program, an afterschool program that serves very low-income children in Dorchester. There is the Bill McBride Scholarship Fund to help with some of the students' tuition. Bill was a former SUMC member.

In 1999, the “sister” churches each raised funds for a handicap access to Greenwood Memorial. SUMC raised over \$10,000, and many of our members helped to build a handicapped ramp at Greenwood over several months’ time under the leadership of Ted Carvalho and Bill Avery.

We continue this relationship with a combined service near Martin Luther King Day. Greenwood and SUMC alternate hosting a summer picnic.

**The Outreach Commission** — Outreach has always been an important part of our yearly budget and we strive to make thoughtful considerations regarding the allocation of the congregation’s gifts to make a lasting impact on our local, regional and global communities. To guide our decision making regarding which organizations to support, we use the 3F’s: focus, face and fishers. We support missions that have a clear focus that is in line with our beliefs. We prefer to have a “face” or a contact with the organization. We also want to support organizations that are not only focused on helping people immediately but in the long term also; we want to create fishers instead of simply feeding the hungry.

SUMC supports 18 local organizations including 6 local food pantries, 4 shelters, 2 medical care/support programs, 4 community support centers for issues ranging from domestic violence to outfitting a home with the essentials, and 2 organizations that focus on eradicating hunger in Massachusetts.

Globally, we continue to support several missionaries including David and Lori Persons, who have retired after 35 years in the Congo but are staying on as volunteers, and Belinda Forbes in Nicaragua. Support is given for Yonathan, a boy from Bolivia, for his housing and schooling.

Funds are directed through the United Methodist Committee on Relief for domestic and international disaster relief and world hunger, as well as supporting the New England Conference’s initiative to eradicate malaria through the “Imagine No Malaria” campaign.

Advent brings the “Advent Conspiracy” – the theme is “Worship Fully. Spend Less, Give More. Love All.” encouraging people to give more thoughtfully and to consider giving gifts of time and shared experiences. We also send cards to prisoners at the Concord prison and provide gifts for needy children and teenagers through the Peanut Butter Tree.

In 1974, the church began catering meals once each month at Rosie's Place, a drop-in center and emergency shelter for homeless women and their children.

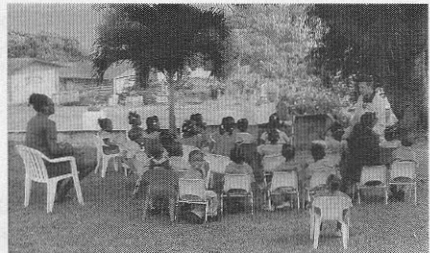
SUMC supported Sudbury's first Habitat for Humanity home with help in building, and the congregation matched a \$10,000 initiative gift in 2007. Chris Straub organized the SUMC volunteers.

### **Dominica**

For thirty-five years our church has reached out to help people from the Methodist Churches in Marigot and Wesley Village, Dominica. After a devastating hurricane in 1979, Mel and Betty Meyer went to Dominica as medical missionaries. They established the Family-to-Family Support program in which SUMC families offer financial assistance to individuals and families in Dominica, including school children, the elderly and shut-ins. Many relationships between Dominicans and SUMC folks have been established and continue to flourish. In 2005, the sponsorship program expanded to include support for a number of schools, including and especially the Marigot Preschool. SUMC funds the teachers' salaries and provides material support through school supply drives. Pictures of SUMC support hang prominently on the walls of the Marigot Preschool.

SUMC's relationship with Dominica has also revolved around work teams. On average, we send a work team to Dominica every two years. We work side by side with our Dominica brothers and sisters to build, fix, clean, and otherwise enhance the physical space of churches and schools. And, in the process, we also build relationships. Some of the projects include the library and playground in Marigot and the community building in Wesley.

Relationship is the key word. Whether through sponsorship and letter exchanges or working on a project together, the SUMC/ Dominica relationship flourishes and grows through the friendships we've built with each other. And we expect this SUMC commitment to Dominica to flourish for decades to come.



### **Sunny Hill Preschool**

After the Sunday School wing was completed in late 1957, the pastor, the Rev. Jones, asked a young mother in the congregation, June Spiller, if she would organize a preschool. Several women of the church joined in and they held bake sales, sold berries they had picked themselves, and went to garage sales looking for school supplies. With a tip from a Sudbury school custodian, they went to the dump and found school paper that had been used on only one side. In 1958, Sunny Hill Preschool was born with twenty kindergartners and twelve nursery-age children.

Sunny Hill, now over 56 years old, enrolls about 160 children, ages two through five in the NAEYC-accredited, play-based curriculum. Their mission is to make a high-quality, affordable, nurturing and supportive early childhood learning environment available to families in Sudbury and the surrounding communities. Sudbury has been voted the #1 Preschool in Sudbury and received the Bronze Award for Regional Preschools.

Nancy Hammerton, a longtime SUMC member, served as director for several years. Another member, Marge Stiles, gave countless hours as the school's treasurer. Since the 1990s, professional directors have been hired to oversee Sunny Hill with administrative support provided by a committee of SUMC members elected annually by the church. Karen Bowler has served for sixteen years as Chairperson of the Sunny Hill Committee.

### **Sudbury Savoyards**

The Sudbury Savoyards have a unique relationship with SUMC. Although originally organized in 1961 as a fundraiser for church construction, the Savoyards have continued ever since to produce highly professional Gilbert & Sullivan operettas for the enjoyment of the surrounding communities. Betty Farmer led musically-talented church members in the early years, and Will Ford ably chaired the productions as they expanded in size and scope. Reorganized in 1983, the Savoyards became a community organization rather than an SUMC program.

The annual Gilbert and Sullivan production is held at Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School at the end of February, but all rehearsals, set and costume construction as well as storage are held at the church. Many summer shows are also produced in Hawes Hall.

Every year since the early 1970s, all their profits – more than \$215,000 – have been donated to the United Methodist Committee on Relief for the relief of world hunger.

### **Church Office**

The church office has always been an important contributor to the energy and execution of pastoral outreach. The first volunteer secretary was the pastor's wife, Lois Taylor, who in addition to the usual duties created and produced the *Chronicle* newsletter. Roberta Grierson, who had been assisting as volunteer, became part of the SUMC staff. After her retirement in 1972, Beverly Paro took over for twenty-six years. Sue Gutheim came as assistant and then as secretary in 1996. Mike Daniel worked for eight years as assistant. In between there were Lea Burgess and Paula Hiltz. In 2010, Shetal Kaye became the glue to hold the church business together with the more appropriate title Office Manager.

In 2014, Alexandra Plotkin was hired to be SUMC's first Communications Coordinator. Within four months, she developed and launched a new website.

A few months later, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee hired Mike Greb as Business Manager. Previously, long-time members such as Ed Ross and Sue Gorman covered our church's payroll and financial functions.

### **Custodians**

There have been many custodians over the years keeping the church building in good running order. The very first was Rodney Hadley. To mention a few since then – Arthur Maurice, Walter Hallett, Don Peak, Charles Martin and, at present, Phil Lenentine and Joe Picorelli.



**Chronology — SUMC History**

- 1823 The initial Methodist class formed in October in Sudbury by Reverend Erastus Otis. Meetings held in the old Northwest School House.
- 1835 Town of Sudbury voted not to allow schools to be used for religious meetings.  
Emerson Brown began soliciting aid for the erection of a meetinghouse.  
Deed conveyed on September 19 to purchase 60 rods of land across from First Parish from Luther Goodnow for \$125.
- 1836 Meetinghouse erected and dedicated at what is now the Sudbury Town Center.
- 1837 Methodist Conference sent Reverend Elias Scott as its first full-time pastor.
- 1841 Church bell purchased for \$303.25, most from a gift of Edwin Cutting.
- 1893 Church remodeled; corner tower erected, cathedral glass windows added.
- 1895 Ladies Benevolent Society formed.
- 1896 Meetinghouse rebuilt on the same site in the form as it appears today as The Presbyterian Church of Sudbury.
- 1908 Numbers in congregation ranged from 32 on a rainy day to 82 when the Baccalaureate sermon to the high school graduating class was given.

- October 4-6: 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of Methodism to Sudbury is celebrated. \$536 is raised in an attempt to retire the mortgage.
- 1909 Committees on foreign and home missions established.
- 1910 Men's Union met on alternate Thursdays.  
Debt payment banquet on October 27 was attended by 150 members and pastors from other churches in town.  
Electric lights installed.
- 1911 Georgianna Goodnow bequeathed home on Old Sudbury Road to be used as a parsonage. It was sold in 1945.
- 1912 All-church picnic held at Lake Boone.
- 1915 Ladies Benevolent Society became Ladies Aid Society; in 1945 called Women's Society of Christian Service, and is now called United Methodist Women.
- 1916 Budget of \$825 for the year presented. Ladies Aid Society held banquet for graduating seniors at high school.
- 1917 Sunday School attendance averaged 40 children, with an enrollment of 76. An additional 28 were on the cradle roll.  
Pastor's salary was \$550 per year plus parsonage and two weeks' vacation. The organist was paid \$1 per Sunday.  
Memorial Congregational Church of South Sudbury asked the Methodist Pastor to appoint a five-person committee to consider the advisability of uniting the two churches. Decision was made to retain our own church.

- 1923 Centennial anniversary of Methodism in Sudbury observed on January 21.
- 1924 Pastor's vacation increased to four weeks each year.
- 1930 On February 5, the Town Hall burned down, and Church allowed the town to use the church for town affairs.
- 1938 Name changed from Sudbury Methodist Episcopal Church to Sudbury Methodist Church, in accord with the national conference meeting.
- 1939 Sudbury became an outpost church supplied by the Saxonville pastor. Furnace replaced at a cost of \$900.
- 1941 Saxonville Church dissatisfied with arrangement of sharing pastor with Sudbury. Joint quarterly conference with Marlborough Methodist Church.
- 1942 Members attend First Parish Church, as Sudbury church closed for summer. Interchange of services with Marlborough.
- During war years, Church objective was to pray for peace and to keep up morale. A service flag was purchased.
- New Year's Eve vigil was held. A rose was presented to each mother who had a son in the armed forces.
- 1943 Gas rationing made it difficult for some members to attend church. Attendance averaged 40-44 per Sunday.
- 1944 Special quarterly conference held on January 17. Board of Trustees recommended that the parsonage be sold and property bought for a new parsonage. In the board's opinion, it was uneconomical and unwise to improve the present parsonage. Proposal turned down.

March 11: Five-person committees from SUMC and Memorial Congregational Church were appointed to study a proposal to engage one minister to serve both churches.

Methodist youth held joint functions with Unitarian Church youth, including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

Church closed for the month of August.

As of September 6, morning services began at 9:30 a.m. instead of 9:45 a.m.

“Crusade for Christ” launched on November 21 to bring people back to church and to stimulate interest in Sunday School attendance.

- 1950      May 22: Sudbury Council of Churches formed.
- 1954      October 18: Hurricane damaged church. Investigated using insurance money to enlarge Church.
- 1955      August 25: Conferred with William and Ella Davison about purchasing lots for a new church site on Old Sudbury Road. Agreement reached to purchase two lots consisting of four acres for \$5,000 and one lot of three acres for \$4,500. Question of moving old church to new site for \$8,000 was considered.
- Worship attendance reached 100 for the first time.
- 1956      February 13: Deed for above land purchase signed. Church membership at 50.
- March 22: Merton Haskell reported \$7,143.20 was in the building fund.

- 1957 March 17: Edward Melville Bridge of Wakefield was named architect for the new church.
- April 14: Ground broken for Sunday school wing with Bishop John Wesley Lord officiating.
- December 8: Sunday school wing was completed and dedicated.
- 1958 January 8: Borrowed \$3,000 from savings to pay debt on Sunday school wing. Sudbury and Maynard Churches share same pastor.
- W.S.C.S. donation allowed for a full-sized kitchen in the Sunday School wing.
- April 14: Work began on parish hall and parsonage. Building pledge drive netted \$18,000. Second fundraising in May equaled \$36,000.
- Sunny Hill Preschool founded under leadership of June Spiller.
- 1959 W.S.C.S. dedicated ladies' parlor to Ella Davison in October.
- November 1: Moving date from old Church to new.
- First *Chronicle* published.
- 1960 January 10: Troop 60, Boy Scouts of America, reorganized and chartered, SUMC being the sponsoring institution.
- April 16: Old Church building sold to Presbyterian Church for approximately \$30,000. Sudbury population is 7,450.
- Parsonage completed on November 1. Resident minister, The Rev. Delphas Barnett, and wife moved in.



- 1961      January 30: Church membership reaches 335.  
Sudbury Savoyards performed “Trial by Jury,” conducted by member Betty Farmer, as a building fundraiser.  
April 15: Parish hall completed and dedicated with Bishop James K. Mathews officiating.
- 1962      New sanctuary construction began in March.  
Pond and basement bowling alley completed and dedicated.  
September 30: Cornerstone laid for sanctuary.
- 1963      March 1: Sanctuary completed with \$55,000 debt.  
1841 bell from former building placed in new steeple.  
June 23: First worship service held in new sanctuary.  
October 20: Bishop James K. Mathews consecrated church and dedicated Baldwin three-manual organ, purchased in 1951.
- 1964      January 19: Cardinal Richard Cushing, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic diocese, spoke in Sanctuary — the first time a Roman Catholic Cardinal had spoken in a Protestant church.  
Congregation Beth El held their services here until their Synagogue was completed in 1969.
- 1965      Charles Kirkpatrick Library established in parish hall.  
Bob Johnson and Ed Mason designed and built a heated ramp to bypass sanctuary steps. This ramp has since been removed.
- 1966      Men’s Club chartered with 72 attending. Six W.S.C.S. Circles met separately.  
Church sign and driveway lanterns erected. 200 trees and bushes planted on Church grounds in one day.

- 1967 Coffee House established in the parish hall and basement, serving 250 young Sudbury people every Saturday night.
- 1968 April 23: Name changed from Sudbury Methodist Church to Sudbury United Methodist Church, after merger of Methodist Church with Evangelical United Brethren Church.  
First Arts Festival held in April.  
A second parsonage on Pelham Island Road was purchased.  
First all-church family retreat held in September at Camp Aldersgate, Scituate, Rhode Island.
- 1970 First Barn Sing, a holiday caroling tradition conceived by music director, John Harper, held in December.
- 1972 Pelham Island Road parsonage sold and a larger home at 19 Drum Lane purchased for Associate Pastor residence.
- 1973 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Methodism in Sudbury celebrated in October.  
Parish Hall renamed Hawes Hall in honor of L. Roy Hawes.  
The Outreach Commission, under the leadership of Bill and Barbara McBride, established a partnership between SUMC and the Chippewa Methodist Church in Mt. Pleasant, MI.
- 1974 SUMC began to cater meals once per month at Rosie's Place.  
Family retreat moved to Geneva Point, New Hampshire, in order to accommodate 300 attendees.
- 1976 November 14: New pipe organ, acquired under the leadership of Paul Weiss, was dedicated.
- 1978 \$46,590 sent outside the church for outreach.  
First Lenten booklet, authored by members, published.

- 1979      October 28: Hawes Hall handicap ramp, built by members and directed by Ted Carvalho, is dedicated.
- 1980      Mel and Betty Meyer and family began a two-year medical ministry in Dominica.  
First work team sent to Marigot, Dominica, to build classrooms for St. Andrews High School.  
Church budget exceeded \$200,000.  
“Return the Gift” fundraising led by Sue Kuykendall.
- 1981      Outreach commission began supporting missionaries David and Lorene Persons in Zaire.
- 1982      Teaching Parish Committee began working with student interns from Boston University School of Theology.  
October 7: Ground broken for Davison Chapel, designed by John Harper.
- 1983      Ten-foot-high cross made of stained glass by Trish Hendershot placed in Chapel in August.  
September 5: Davison Chapel dedicated.  
Sudbury Savoyards reorganized under new bylaws.  
Sally Osborn relieved Will Ford as chairperson after 17 years.  
Puppet ministry began under the leadership of Karla Swanson and Larry Bankart, and continued for 16 years.  
In December, the Meyer family, SUMC members, became missionaries to Nepal for three years.
- 1984      Third work team in past four years sent to Dominica.
- 1985      Rev. Floyd Shaeffer repeated his 1980 clown ministry at September’s Family Retreat.  
Diamonds offered for reconciliation in South Africa.

- 1987 Work team sent to Dominica.
- 1988-89 Bill McBride consults with African churches on computer selection, purchases and training.
- 1989-90 Work teams sent to Dominica.
- 1990 Caring Network, a neighborhood plan to help meet crisis needs of members, inaugurated.  
Members rebuilt Chris Rose's home, after a devastating fire.  
SUMC approved a reconciling and welcoming statement.
- 1991 Work team, led by Associate Pastor, Avis Hoyt-O'Connor, and her husband, Paul, sent to Northern Chile to build Kusayapu, a Methodist agricultural school.  
Job Search Program began with other Sudbury churches to assist in finding work for unemployed.  
Greenwood Memorial Methodist Church in Dorchester, MA, becomes "sister" church with SUMC.
- 1992 New playground for Sunny Hill Preschool constructed.  
Stephen Ministry began in August.
- 1993 First class of Stephen Ministers commissioned in March.  
26<sup>th</sup> annual family retreat moved to Pilgrim Pines Conference Center, West Swanzey, NH, in September.  
Building Space Needs Task Force organized to assess present and future building needs at SUMC.
- 1994 Work team sent to South Carolina to rebuild a family's home destroyed by Hurricane Hugo.  
Building Committee, under leadership of John Anderson, formed to plan future additions.

- 1996 May 20: Ground broken for construction, under the leadership of George O'Reilly, of new Sunny Hill classrooms and offices and new access to sanctuary basement.
- Dedication of new construction in September.
- First summer production by Sudbury Savoyards in July again to benefit world hunger.
- 1997 April 14: Broke ground for second phase of construction: new choir room, sacristy, church offices, handicap ramp, elevator and all-purpose room. SUMC members donate labor.
- 1998 May 10: Dedication of new construction. All-purpose room named in honor of George O'Reilly.
- 1999 Handicap ramp built at Greenwood Methodist Church by members of both churches under the leadership of Ted Carvalho and Bill Avery.
- 2000 Dedication in June of the Fran Walker Memorial Garden under the direction of Mary Lou Abbott.
- Senior youth group reorganized under the name "God Squad."
- The new youth program included Sunday School, confirmation instruction, social activities and outreach.
- 2001 Permanent Endowment Fund Committee formed in July.
- First full-time Director of Christian Education, Andy Andrews, hired as director in July.
- Dedication of Habitat for Humanity home built with funds (\$30,000) and labor contributed by SUMC members, under the leadership of Dave D'Orlando.



- 2002      Renewal in June of mission to Dominica.  
Caribbean Night – music, dancing and food as a fundraiser for Greenwood Church.  
December 5: Began Saturday 5 p.m. services.
- 2003      Established a Permanent Audit Committee.  
Volunteers to Greenwood's Shalom After School program.  
Grant of \$24,000 received from Sudbury Foundation to replace fire alarms and emergency lighting.  
Work Team led by Rick Houpt sent to Dominica in April.
- 2004      SUMC became an official Reconciling and Welcoming Congregation.  
Mission trip to Dominica – work on children's playground and bookshelves for Wesley Library.  
Anti-Racism Task Force created.  
Established the Health Ministry Commission and Church Growth Commission.
- 2005      Prayer Shawl Ministry started by the Health Ministry Commission.  
Capital Campaign – Together for Tomorrow.
- 2006      Creation of "Welcome and Information Center" by Church Growth Commission.  
Developed SUMC website ([www.sudbury-umc.org](http://www.sudbury-umc.org)).
- 2007      Strategic Plan – Youth Empowerment & Support, Christian Education, Vital Worship, Conflict Management.  
Blessing of the Animals.  
249 Old Sudbury Road renovation – updated kitchen, bathroom, added kitchenette and double garage.

As part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SUMC building, an annual “Birthday Present” campaign was instituted by The General Endowment Fund.

- 2008      Adult Education Cornerstone classes began — 140 attended.  
 A one-day retreat was held at Grotonwood in Groton, MA.  
 Outreach commission sponsored a Spring Cleaning Giveaway for Maine Economic Ministry, Household Goods Recycling, and Habitat for Humanity.  
 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sunny Hill Preschool.  
 Youth Empowerment and Focus Group (YES) hosted community events for helping parents and teens in Sudbury and surrounding towns become educated about pressures teens face.
- 2009      Cell antenna installed in the steeple.  
 Proximity card-activated locks installed.  
*Chronicle* distribution moved from US Mail to email.  
 School supplies collected for Marshall Elementary School, Dorchester.  
 Connexions Concerts featuring talent from SUMC and guests.  
 Dr. Elizabeth Windsor came as Director of Christian Education.
- 2010      Three-month sabbatical for Rev. Joel Guillemette.  
 Support given to Free Medical Clinic at Congregation Beth El.  
 Outreach trip to Biloxi, Mississippi, to repair hurricane damage.  
 “Giving in Bloom” Campaign, to encourage members to serve in more creative ways, instituted.  
 Business-size “Event Cards” listing Christmas and Easter services for congregants to pass on to friends and acquaintances.

- 2011 Stations of the Cross for the Good Friday Service.  
Work Team went to Dominica to help with the Community Center.  
“Advent Conspiracy” encouraged congregants to spend less time and money on Christmas — instead to give to others to make a less hectic holiday.  
Pam Gillispie hired as Adult Ministries Coordinator.
- 2012 Celebrated 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the Cornerstone at SUMC.  
A new sound system was installed in memory of Ted Mills, Richard and Marie Herstine.  
Youth acolyte program added to Sunday service.  
Youth went to Dominica.  
Strategic Planning Task Force began: Proclamation, Spiritual Development, Fellowship, Outreach.  
New Church Picture Directory.
- 2013 A Prayer Garden was developed by Gabriel Faucher as his Eagle Scout Project.  
Celebrated Earth Day.  
Work Team to Dominica to help build community center.
- 2014 Cardinal Sean O’Malley of the Boston Diocese preached at SUMC on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cardinal Cushing’s visit.  
Celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of enrolling as a Welcoming and Reconciling Congregation.  
Family room above narthex completely refurbished.  
Solar panels on Sanctuary and Hawes roof installed.

Cell tower removed.

Air conditioning installed in the Sanctuary and Hawes Hall which was made possible by anonymous donation and contributions from the Sudbury Savoyards.

Hired a part-time Communications Coordinator, Alexandra Plotkin, and a part-time Business Manager, Michael Greb.

A music program using chimes from Maynard UMC, led by Sherry Stonebraker, began.

Esther and Rebecca Circles join to form SUMC Women's Fellowship.

### **SUMC Lay Leaders**

L. Roy Hawes	-1965
Roy Paro	1965-1968
Bill Morgan	1969-1970
Edward Ross	1971-1973
Tom Kraut	1974-1976
Bill McBride	1977-1980
Gaynelle Weiss	1981-1983
Alice Vannerson	1984-1986
John Anderson	1986-1988
Bob Vannerson	1989-1991
Ann Hamilton	1992-1994
Cindy Smith	1995-1998
Caryl Walsh	1999-2002
Eleanor Braun & Diane Dacey	2002-2004
Karen Lubic & Richard Smith	2004-2006
John Fraize & Nancy Hammerton	2007-2009
Karen Krone & Nancy Hammerton	2010-2011
Nancy Hammerton & John Condon	2012-

**Pastors of the Methodist Church of Sudbury**

1836-1837	Elias C. Scott
1837-1839	L. Boyden
1839-1840	G. W. Bates
1840-1841	J. S. Ellis
1841-1842	P. R. Sawyer
1842-1843	T. W. Tucker
1843-1844	G. W. Weeks
1844-1845	Benjamin King
1845-1846	Luther Caldwell
1846-1847	W. F. Lacount
1847-1848	Horace Moulton
1848-1849	George Frost
1849-1852	L. P. Frost
1852-1853	John W. Lee
1853-1855	J. H. Gaylord
1855-1857	M. Leffingwell
1857-1858	William A. Clapp
1858-1860	Charles S. Rogers
1860-1862	Joseph Scott
1862-1863	Porter M. Vinton
1863-1864	George Sunderland
1864-1865	Philo P. Gorton
1865-1866	J. Wm. Jordan
1866-1868	George E. Chapman
1868-1870	Miles R. Barney
1871-1874	Walter Wilkie
1874-1875	John S. Day
1875-1877	A. M. Sherman
1877-1879	Nathaniel Bemis
1879-1880	J. W. Richardson
1880-1881	J. A. Ames
1881-1883	F. O. Holman / M. D. Sill
1883-1884	A. R. Archibald
1884-1887	Ichabod Marcy



1887-1888	George H. Bolster
1888-1890	H. E. Wilcox
1890-1892	W. W. Colburn
1892-1893	W. T. Seaman
1898-1899	E. Higgins
1900-1901	W. O. Allen
1901-1902	G. E. Folk
1902-1904	Fred McConnell
1904-1905	A. A. Felch
1905-1908	J. F. Phillips
1908-1912	George H. Clarke
1912-1913	Paul M. Hillman
1913-1915	George H. Clark
1915-1917	Clair G. Davis
1917-1918	A. G. Williamson
1918-1935	George H. Clarke
1936-1938	Stead Thornton*
1938-1941	Elmore Brown*
1941-1944	W. F. Preston**
1944-1945	Supplied by Conference
1945-1947	H. F. Fulton***
1947-1949	H. E. Leech
1949-1959	Robert K. Jones, Jr.***
1959-1961	Delphas D. Barnett
1961-1967	Blaine E. Taylor
1967-1968	William J. Ogle
1968-1982	Shephard S. Johnson
1982-1989	John O. Parker
1989-1997	David A. Purdy
1997-2002	Christine K. Elliott
2002-2006	Donald J. Rudalevige
2006-	Joel Guillemette

\* Also Saxonville Pastor

\*\* Also Marlborough Pastor

\*\*\* Also Maynard Pastor



**Associate Pastors**

1961-1962	Arthur Prescott
1964-1967	Edward Mason
1967-1968	Wendell Luke, Jr.
1968-1971	Larry D. George
1971-1975	Carleton Talbot
1975-1978	Charles Whitford
1978-1981	Jerry O. Cooke
1981-1986	Gwen O. Purushotham
1986-1987	Chang Hee Son
1987-1989	James W. Cox
1989-1995	Avis Hoyt-O'Connor
1995-1999	Lisa Bruget Cass
1999-2005	Jeffrey J. Hunt
2005-2007	Sarah Ewing-Merrill
2007-2011	John Nash
2011-2014	Jordan Shaw

**Visiting Pastors**

1974-1982	Lemuel K. Lord
1983-1994	Alan H. Moore
1999-2010	Richard E. Harding

**Christian Education Director**

1999-2009	Andy Andrews
2009-2014	Dr. Elizabeth Windsor

**Adult Ministries Coordinator**

2011-2015	Pam Gillispie
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**Business Manager**

2014	Michael Greb
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**Communications Coordinator**

2014	Alexandra Plotkin
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*Sudbury Methodist Church*

*Sudbury, Massachusetts*

The SUMC Historical Committee  
has printed this history for membership and friends  
to have a sense of the heritage of our church.

Lyn MacLean  
Bev Paro  
Roy Paro

1 <sup>st</sup> Edition	1994
2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	2003
3 <sup>rd</sup> edition	2015

Back Cover