

October 2023

Welcome to the history of Epworth United Methodist Church. We hope you find it interesting and informative.

The history found here was written in celebration of Epworth's Seventieth Anniversary in 2022. It was not written as a chronological account, but to reflect the people, events and service involved over the past 70 years.

Rev. Brandie Spletzer has continued to serve as Senior Pastor with Local Pastor Katy Chapman serving as associate.

During the past year two new ministries have been added to our mission. Our Teddy Bear Ministry came first. New and lightly loved bears and other snuggly critters are donated, refurbished and then spend some time in the pews with us. As the need arises members share them with persons who need a little extra care and love. To date over 125 critters have gone out to serve.

As Arlington High School is our neighbor, we are working through them to provide personal care items to students who are in need. "The Store" is open once a month for students, designated by their counselor, to come and select whatever supplies they might need from the store. The store is stocked by donations from the congregation and anyone interested in helping with this mission.

Our building is used many times during the week by various groups and community organizations.

On Sunday, September 24, 2023 we had our annual picnic. It is worth noting that it was held indoors due to 105-degree heat outside! On October 29, 2023 we will hold a "Trunk or Treat" for the community.

Worship continues in person at 10:30 am on Sundays with Sunday School preceding at 9:30. Our worship service is live streamed on Facebook on Sunday mornings and is available anytime following for your viewing.

Rev. Brandie Spletzer  
Nancy Bennett, DR, Compiler  
Beverly Bennett, Editor



**History of  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Arlington, Texas**

**1952 - 2022**

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## I. Acknowledgement and Introduction

*“A single act of kindness throws out roots in all direction, and the roots spring up and make new trees”.*

*Amelia Earhart*

### 1952 - 2022 - Seventy years of witnessing.

That’s a long time. South of Epworth, at what is now the intersection of Cooper Street and Interstate 20 stood an oak tree that was over 100 years old. It was called the Witness Tree. It received this name because every property boundary had been laid out guiding off of this tree. When the people who wanted to build a shopping center there approached Bill Bardin, whose family had owned the land for many years, his answer was, “Only if we can save the Witness Tree”. The tree wouldn’t fit into the plans, so they spent untold time and money moving that 100-year-old tree. It did not survive. Its stump can be seen today on the southern edge of the property with a plaque that tells the story.

Epworth has a similar story, but with a different ending. It was planted in its present location because there was already a small block building on the property. In the early 70’s when the Annual Conference wanted to move Epworth south on Matlock Road but rename it, the membership prevailed. Epworth stayed in place even though they lost some members to start the new church. The difference in the two stories is that the Witness tree died and Epworth has continued to be a witness. The neighborhood has changed, the property has grown smaller but it is still alive.

Our intent in this document is to tell as many stories as we can about the people, after all, the church is the people. We celebrate God’s mission and ministry in the people of Epworth United Methodist Church. Our hope is that in some way, you may experience God’s love for you and God’s call on your life as you read.

When we look at the origin of the Christian church, we look to Pentecost and God’s calling to a group of the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ. It was on the day of Pentecost, the Jewish celebration of crops and the giving of their best to God, that the Holy Spirit so filled people to go into the world and gather others into God’s realm of Love.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we celebrate a Holy Trinity of God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer. This Holy Trinity is (1) God, creator of all things, (2) God’s Son – Jesus Christ, in whom nothing was created that wasn’t created through him, and (3) God’s Holy Spirit who lives and breathes God’s Love into all. It is God’s Spirit today, which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who moves in us and others to be the church.

We hope you enjoy this document. It explains a humble beginning and how a pastor brought people together, at this site. It tells how God’s mission and ministry has manifested and continues to do so in the people of Epworth. Led by many pastors called by God and by the people of Epworth, inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, *we are church.*

Brandie Spletzer (2022 - Present )

Mike Love (2018 - 2022)

Katy Chapman LP (2021 - Present)

Nancy L. Bennett, DR

## II. A Humble Beginning – Decision to start a church.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”  
Psalm 127:1*

At a district preacher’s meeting in Fort Worth in the spring of 1952, Dr. G. Alfred Brown, District Superintendent, announced to the assembled ministers that a five-acre tract of land had been purchased on the southern outskirts of Arlington, near Park Row and Cooper Streets. It contained a cement block barn approximately 40 x 110 feet.

The cost of the land is remembered as being about \$15,000. John Wesley Ford, pastor of First Methodist Church suggested the name Epworth, going back to the church’s English heritage, saying there were already too many churches in the district named for saints.

The new pastor was not named until the end of the Annual Conference in Waco that year. Paul Wiseman was assigned to this empty, block barn and told to convert it into a church. No budget, no helpers, just Paul Wiseman.

## III. Marking Our Anniversaries

This document marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Epworth, three other editions of Epworth’s history have been published.

**Forward 2002 Edition** - Only five years have passed since the last update, but 2002 is a very special year. It marks our Jubilee or 50<sup>th</sup> year as a church. As we prepared to mark this date with a celebration on September 22, 2002, we have continued to be a viable community of faith in an ever-changing society. Building on the past, serving the present, we move toward the future.

Nancy L Bennett, Deacon, Retired  
Compiler

Sabra J. Nesbitt  
Editor

**Forward 1997 Edition** - Ten years have passed since the first part of this book was written. Much had happened at Epworth and she continues to be a viable part of the community, although in the near future her mission may change to some degree due to changing times and needs. We are no longer on the Southern edge of Arlington, but right smack in the middle. The area surrounding the property has continued to become less residential and more commercial. The University of Texas at Arlington is a large neighbor, and needs to be included in our ministry. We will continue to look for ways to serve the community in which we are located.

The history of any organization is important to its future and it is my hope that this expanded version of the life and times of Epworth United Methodist Church will tell her story well and serve to usher in her future. Some additional facts and interesting tidbits have come to light and have been incorporated into the original text.

Nancy L. Bennett, Deacon FC  
Compiler

Sabra J. Nesbitt  
Editor

**Forward 1987 Edition** - This brief history of Epworth United Methodist Church is written in celebration of the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on October 11, 1987. Information has been gathered from a number of sources. Appreciation is especially expressed to Betty Weaver who had saved so many newspaper clippings, programs, yearbooks, etc. Other valuable contributions came from so many good Epworth people that I hesitate to list for fear of omitting someone. Please accept my thanks for answers to all my phone called questions and for all the pieces of information all of you made known to me.

It is the hope of the Anniversary Committee that the history can be updated each year so we will be ready for the fiftieth and on into the future. We would appreciate any more information we can obtain on the past history.

John and Eva Morris  
Chairpersons  
Anniversary Committee

Sabra J. Nesbitt  
Editor

## **IV. History of Epworth's Facility and Membership**

*As a tree grows by adding new roots and branches Epworth added rooms and buildings. Charter members, by their witness brought others to share in the ministry.*

**FFA Barn to a Church** - (1952) The physical building for Epworth people started with a simple Future Farmers of America barn on the property the Annual Conference purchased. Rev. Wiseman was assigned to first convert this barn into space for the church. He started by hiring a concrete contractor to pour a slab floor within the structure and began converting the north end into a sanctuary. He worked mostly alone for four months, hiring a sheet-rock crew to do that job. He did not solicit membership during this time, and continued to live in Euless and attend First Methodist Church in Arlington, where he preached from time to time.

With help from members of First Methodist the first services were held in the church on October 12, 1952. Sunday school classes began meeting October 19. The building had been divided in half with the north end being used as the sanctuary and the south end for class room space. The charter of initial membership was open until November 16, 1952. There were approximately 138 charter members. The church was now within the city limits and growing rapidly. By mid-1956 the membership had doubled.

**New Education Spaces** - In 1954 during the tenure of Rev. Ernest DeWald, an educational wing was added at the southwest side of the original building. In 1956/57 construction was begun on the complete north wing which includes the present sanctuary, offices and classrooms. Church membership was growing and was now just over 500.



**Back Building** - In 1956 the 'back building', then the recreation building, was built by the Methodist Men. It was divided into a kitchen with an enormous cast iron stove, a large open room with rest rooms and a small office. This building has also served as a Montessori School, Epworth Child Care Center, Youth building, The Connexion, an after-school connection for students at Arlington High School, and eventually Connexion 1 for Advocates for Special People.

**Sanctuary** - As Rev Henry Price came to Epworth in June 1957 a bond program was underway to finance a new sanctuary and more class rooms. Members could purchase bonds ranging from \$50 to \$1000 and those bonds would mature over a ten and one-half-year period returning the original investment with interest. The first Sunday in the Sanctuary was Mother's Day, May 11, 1958. That Sunday's attendance was 310 people. Membership was just over 500.

In the original configuration the choir was in the loft, the complete east wall was stained glass, and the ceiling was covered in acoustical tile. Problems developed with the glass window so the glass was removed and narrow panels of the same glass were installed on either side of a bricked area; (the current panels were added during the tenure of Rev. John Basham).

Later the chancel was rearranged for a center pulpit and the choir moved from the loft to the chancel area. In the next renovation, after damage from a storm, the Chancel was split, pulpit on one side, lectern on the other and the alter raised to the upper level with center steps. All components are movable. As the pipe organ was damaged in the storm, a new electronic organ and small grand piano were added. The sanctuary was brought in to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century when James Ballard was pastor with the edition of video screens.

**Family Life Center (FLC)** - (1993) The Family Life Center capital campaign occurred during the tenure of Pastor Neil Norman. Membership had declined in the 1970's, partly due to the opening of several other churches within a short span of time, and picked back up under Rev. Herzig and Rev. Norman. Average attendance in 1982 was

130. The FLC was completed and dedicated in April 1994, during the tenure of Pastor Barbara Lucas. It was completed just in time, as on August 20, 1995, a rare east wind in a storm lifted the roof of the sanctuary and caused extensive damage.

During the time of repair and refurbishment in the Sanctuary, the Family Life Center was used for worship on Sunday mornings. This building has witnessed well, providing space for church dinners, wedding receptions, volleyball, pickle ball, youth overnight stays, conferences and mission projects. It also provided temporary space for Arlington Life Shelter when they needed it.

**Interior of the Original Building** - The interior of the original building, still recognizable as the long central hall, has been modified several times over the years. Class rooms were added in place of the original sanctuary; the south end went from class rooms to youth center (1976) with small kitchen to family life center and back to classrooms. The last set of classrooms were for nursery/preschool age children. Two of the nursery rooms were eventually used as part of the Epworth Christian Children's Center c. 1995/96.

**Parsonages** - The first parsonage for Epworth pastors was purchased in June 1953. It was located at 1424 Bennett Street. More space was needed for Pastor Clayton Lewis as he came to serve the church in 1962, and the second parsonage was built at 1317 Academy Circle. The Bennett Street parsonage was sold. The new parsonage was completed in 1965.

Our current parsonage is on West Lavender Lane and was purchased when the parsonage on Academy Circle was sold circa 2012-2013. Pastor Brandie Spletzer and her family will be moving to the parsonage in August 2022.

**Membership** - Membership began with approximately 138 Charter Members. During the first year it is reported that there were 50 prospective visitors each week as Arlington was experiencing fast growth. By 1956 the membership had doubled and in 1958 it was just over 500. Peak membership was reached in 1965 at 700+.

In the 1970's several new Methodist churches were opened and drew from Epworth's members, largely because these churches were in the neighborhood where these members lived. Worship attendance averaged 150. This increased by 1991 and new members had been added. Currently (October 2002), given the Coronavirus-19 pandemic (COVID), being on line, and an aging congregation attendance is good and the journey and mission continues.

## V. Charter Members

**Charter Members:** The first seeds or witnesses from Epworth. Many had been members at First Methodist and came to help the new church start be planted well.

### 10-12-52

Robert and Marjorie J. Brentlinger (He was Dr. Brentlinger, a general practitioner)

B. H. and Lou Calame

Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Cardwell

Richard N. and Virginia Coffee

Jan Coffee

Dwight B. and Mary Crawford

Dwight Robert Crawford

Bertha W. Elder (Known by all as 'Granny Elder' and was a force at Epworth until 1988)

Mr. and Mrs. John Evans

B. M. and Lassie Forbes

David and Arwillla Foster

Richard Jones

B. M. And Ruby McBride

Mrs. A. M. Rawlings

Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Scheble, Jr.

Nita F. Scheble

Mr. and Mrs. Evert Staudt

Walter F. and Kathryn Turner

Mr. and Mrs. John E. Willis

Katie Mae Willis

Dorothy M. Wiseman (The pastor's wife)

Sharon Wiseman

W. P. Wright

**10-19-52**

Mrs. J. Austin Boyd

Mr. and Mrs. William F. Brown

Sharon Brown

J. F. Bush

Johnny Bush (He and his wife to be Blanche were the first couple married at Epworth)

Mr. and Mrs. Guy W. Carroll

Sharon Sue Carroll

Rufus and Olivia Chamberlain

Billie Jean Forbes

Mrs. Mattie Hudson (Mattie spent many hours in the nursery caring for the children)

Mr. and Mrs. T. B. Johnson

Mary Newell (Mrs. J. Alvin)

Larry Newell

Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Meyer

Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Nimmo

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Robins

W. H. Robins, Jr.

C.D. and Celita Sessions (owned the construction company which built the parsonage on Academy Circle)

Keith Sessions

Elizabeth Sessions

Mr. And Mrs. Carroll Sheffield

Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Wainscott

Menzie L. Worley

Mrs. Myrtle L. Worley

**10-26-52**

Mr. and Mrs. Burton Clemons (Burton and Dorothy Clemons were active for many years)

Mrs. W. W. Wallace

Elmo Jones

Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Maguire

Mr. and Mrs. Y. A. Wright

**11-02-52**

Thomas A. and Lois Bennett

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford J. Chapman

Mrs. E. C. Chapman (Three more generations have followed)

Mr. and Mrs. Norvell Disch

Norvell Disch, Jr.

Nancy Fletcher

Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Lang

Donald F. Lang

Mr. And Mrs. Paul Loven

Mrs. Charles Massey

**11-09-52**

Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Bentley

Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Brown

Mr. and Mrs. Chester L. Craig

Mrs. O. O. Geer

Mrs. Elmo Jones

Mr. and Mrs. F. M. Stevenson

## 11-16-52

Mrs. D. C. McGary (Nicky)

David G. and Evelyn Beaty

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Rowell

Mr. and Mrs. John M. Goodwin

Billy Goodwin

Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Bohannon

David Bohannon

Joe P. Forbes

William H. West

Mr. and Mrs. Clark Jones

Mr. and Mrs. Eric L. Fletcher

Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Foster

Mr. and Mrs. W. Percy Turner

Mrs. J. F. Ward

Ruth McBride

Mr. and Mrs. F. N. Vinson

Johnny Sessions

Charles C. and Crystal Webster

Judy Layne Webster

John Harlan and Anna Harmon

I. L. Hightower (I. L. owned Hightower Electrical)

## VI. The Witness Tree of Epworth and the Call to Ministry

*“And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”*

*Matthew 25:40*

**Sunday Morning Witness** - Lawrence Odom and Charles Braddock (along with others) would stand in the back of the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings, looking to see who was new to worship at Epworth. How about you?

**Behind the Scenes** - Behind the scenes worship helpers have been many but for the past several decades Charlie and Clydene Doggett have kept the tape ministry going, until we went on line, picked up the sanctuary after service, kept the candles filled with oil, the sound system going and any other necessity to make worship smooth and worshipful on Sunday. One other who has worked behind the scenes is Beverly Bennett, keeping the banners correct and well stored, the baptismal water ready and someone in place to light the candles. Suzanne Winter fills in everywhere. Last but certainly not least is Isaac Maxwell who is behind the camera every Sunday as we reach outside our walls.

**Women’s Ministries** - Woman’s Society of Christian Service (WSCS), Wesleyan Service Guild (WSG), United Methodist Women (UMW) and United Women of Faith (UWF) are the transition of women’s ministry within the Methodist Church (as it has transitioned as well). The first officers were elected and installed for the WSCS October 1, 1952. Mrs. Carroll Sheffield was the first president.

The WSG was added in May of 1955 with six ladies in attendance. Members of the WSG were usually working women and met in the evening. Over time these groups have collected untold numbers of school supplies, many baby items and made lap quilts among other things for local missions and provided monies for both local, national

and world-wide missions. The members of Epworth have always supported these ministries.

Most recent are the gift cards bought at Christmas time with proceeds going to missions. Gifts and congratulations are given to all graduating students, High School and beyond. Members also provide food and support to church members in their time of grief and loss of a loved one.

**Methodist Men** – A very active Methodist Men’s group developed early, and there was a need for more space. The men built a small frame building about the size of a large room just west of the center of the original building. It was used by the men for their meetings and for a men’s Bible Class and for church social events. The mem’s group has been more active at some times than at others. As noted elsewhere they built the building at the back of the property and in recent times did fence repair. In 1991 they took a road trip to Colorado. They continue to meet as the Spirit leads.

**Good Samaritan Shoe Box Ministry** - This ministry provides gifts and the gospel worldwide to children of all ages. It is an ecumenical ministry in which Epworth participated with many faith traditions.

**60s Club – 1960’s** - Epworth used to receive \$60 per month from members to distribute in world missions. Initially we gave to world mission worker, John Ed and Carolyn Francis. And in later years, Epworth provided partial support for the Wesley Byas family.

**Parking for Arlington High School Students – 1988** - An increased student population and inadequate parking at AHS prompted a request from the school for use of the church parking lot for overflow parking. The school district striped the parking spaces and provided security during the day in return. Permits, registered through our office with no cost to the student, were required and a hang-tag was used to identify those with permits. Our youth and many of their friends already used the lot.

**Outreach to Our Community** - Our Family Life Center is used for various annual activities in the Arlington Community; Arlington Citizen’s Police Academy Alumni Association and its Hispanic counterpart (HACPAAA), parties, Good Times Chorus, Arlington Band, overnight stays for youth on mission trips,

**Mother’s Day Out / Day Care** – The ECCC (Epworth Christian Children’s Center was dedicated on January 15, 1995. It was housed in the back building which the Montessori School had vacated. This event was brought about by the hard work of Pastor Barbara Lucas and Karen and Juan Duran, members of Epworth.

It was established as a separate unit for financial responsibilities but was accountable to a board of directors and the Administrative Board of Epworth. The director’s position was a staff position of Epworth. In June 1999 the Ad Council voted to close the Center at the end of 90 days due to financial considerations which would have required heavy investment from the church.

**Summer Discovery Club for Children – 1988** - This ministry was begun and led by member Sarah Dendy. It was held for at least two summers and was for children in the first through sixth grade with creative activities, Bible study and time spent outdoors. Sarah was very much into nature and spent many hours working in the landscape of the church.

**Support Group for Military Families** - During the Persian Gulf Conflict Epworth provided space for a support group for family members of those serving overseas.

**Habitat for Humanity** - Epworth members have worked on homes and at other times we provided lunches for those working.

**Texas Rangers Concessions** - Working concession stands at the ball Park gave Epworth a chance to put money in the bank, but it also gave us a wonderful opportunity to interact with each other in ways we might not have and to interact with the patrons at the ballpark, putting God's best foot forward.

**Private Kindergarten** - From fall 1969 until spring 1972, Epworth operated a private kindergarten for children who would enter first grade the following year. There were two classes each year. When the public schools began to provide free kindergarten classes for all children, Epworth elected to cease providing that service.

**Tape Ministry** - This ministry was begun by John and Evva Morris in the mid 70's as a service for six home-bound members. John recorded the Sunday service and Monday morning Evva began her weekly routine, one that was to continue for three years. Each morning she delivered the tape and returned later in the day to pick it up to be delivered to a different person the next day, until all had listened to the tape. This ministry was later picked up by Charlie and Clydene Doggett who continued it in various forms until COVID, Epworth went on line and the technology of the cassette tape played out.

**Hometouch Ministry** - Home Touch Ministry was begun in 2000 with Jean Snell in the leadership role. A core of volunteers took responsibility to be in touch with Epworth's shut-ins and try to help them say involved in the life of the church.

It evolved over the years with Charlyne Cook and Sue Braddock being major volunteers. They began to use a mail out ministry of weekly devotion from Hometouch Ministries. They also included birthday and holiday greeting cards and visits with the delivery of the Upper Room daily devotional booklet. Presently the weekly letter is still being mailed and The Upper Room delivered but personal visits are minimal due to COVID restrictions and concern for the health of our homebound members.

**Montessori School** - Sometime in 1977, an agreement was reached to allow the Montessori School use of the back building on the property, and as it grew some classrooms in the main building. In 1991 declining enrollment moved the school completely back to one building. Declining enrollment eventually closed the school. Sydne Somers was a teacher in that ministry and is now a member of Epworth.

**People Enrichment Program (PEP)** - In conjunction with First United Methodist of Arlington, Trinity UMC and St Stephens UMC, we provided in school tutoring, one on one. The money for the program was provided by Kiwanis and Aldersgate UMC. The tutoring occurred at Kookan Elementary School on Center Street. At the time it was a regular elementary school.

**Contact Teleministries** - Beginning sometime in 1966/67 Epworth was heavily involved in the beginnings of Contact Teleministries in Arlington. This telephone ministry provides a 'hot line' 24 hours a day for persons needing counseling. During his ministry at Epworth Rev. John Basham served as back-up counselor available to help volunteers with emergency situations. It ceased operation in January 1 996, due to a lack of volunteers and the ability of other organizations to handle this ministry.

**Hope Tutoring Incorporated (H.O.P.E. – Helping Our Pupils Excel)** - We have provided tutoring space (since 2001), tutors, board members, site managers, administrative assistant, and after school pizza parties. Christmas celebrations have been hosted. This is ongoing and ever-changing as H.O.P.E. responds to changing times and circumstances.

**Scouting** - A relationship with scouting began early and by the mid 1060's there were Boy Scout and Explorer Scout groups in the church. By the 1990's Scouting at Epworth included Brownie, Junior and Senior Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts as well as Boy Scouts.

In the earlier years Evva and John Morris and Bill and Betty Davis were two families remembered for working with Boy Scout groups and Sabra Nesbit sponsored Girl Scouts. In more recent history Jeanette (Davis)

and Kirk Brugh served in this area. 1993 – 2002 Cub Scout Pack #93 was active and the church sponsored Troop 1099 from 1999-2008. We also hosted a Girl Scout Troop while Sarah Miller was pastor.

**Hagar's Heart** - We housed and supported this ministry in its beginning efforts. It serves women, men and children in domestic violence situations who are seeking a new life. Hagar's Heart works with safe havens around the Dallas / Ft. Worth Motorplex. It has now moved into its own location as this ministry is growing.

**Allies Youth Organization** - This organization provides outreach to children and families in Eastern Europe. Epworth is providing resources for their ministry to Ukraine refugees under the current war crisis.

**Advocates for Special People** - ASP is an organization for parents with children with special needs, begun in 1997. The program was a brain child of Lawrence Odom. He awoke one night to this answer to prayer and woke his wife, Mary. Their son, Kevin, was a member of Epworth and a child with special needs. Together, Mary and Lawrence started Advocates with the hope that this ministry would be a model program for everyone in the world.

The back building of our property is a day camp for Special Needs Adults, and the location of the first day camp in Arlington. There are now three units and a fourth is under consideration. The initial model at Epworth was witnessed by the city of Arlington, and since then has taken off, including special classes at Tarrant County College. The Pastor of Epworth is on the board of Directors for Advocates. The Family Life Center is also a center for ministry for Advocates for Special Ministry.

### **Multi-generational Mission Trips**

- Tahlequah, Oklahoma – 1992, 1993 UMC Children's Home
- Lydia Patterson Institute, El Paso, Texas – 1990, 1991 also included Juarez, Mexico
- New Mexico/Shiprock – 1989 parsonage for the pastor

**Youth Ministry** - Under Clayton Lewis the youth took annual trips to Lawton, Oklahoma to see the Passion Play and to Lake Whitney for summer retreat. The Jr. High group took a one-day trip to the Indian Mission in Oklahoma, worshipping at the chapel and having a meal at the Mission.

During Pastor Robert Herzig's time at Epworth (1982-1987) he took the youth on several 'Mystery' trips. One such trip was to Waco with a visit to the Texas Ranger's Museum (law enforcement) and the Dr. Pepper Museum, on to Georgetown and a night at First Methodist Church with a visit to the ice cream parlor on the square after dinner.

The next day it was on to Austin for a visit to the capitol and home with a stop in West, Texas for kolaches. Adults along on the trip were Adele and Billy Boliver, Richard and Donna Ebsen and Wayne and Nancy Bennett. The song "*I'll Be Watching You*" was new. Pastor Robert and the youth decided it Was God who was watching you, not Google (as in 2022).

In June 2001 the youth took part in the Conference Youth Mission Trip to Kansas (Four youth, two adults). It was the first time our youth joined the conference effort. They were under the guidance of Bill and Deann Hughes.

In 2007 John Beckling, the youth Director, helped get the youth involved in the East District Student Leadership Team and CTC Student Leadership. We even had one student that served on a South-Central Jurisdictional Youth Team established to place jurisdiction wide opportunities for service, leadership development and spiritual growth jurisdiction wide.

This same group of youth planned a 30 Hour Famine Event and Midwinter retreats for hundreds of students across the conference hosted at Glen Lake Camp. Youth Sunday was also started during John's years as Youth Director. The youth were responsible for the entire worship service.

In 2010 Epworth Youth hosted The Saving Motion, a band from Oklahoma and had several other youth groups come.

In the summer of 2012 the Epworth youth group won the Wesleyan Quadrilateral games at Youth 2012 in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was a global gathering of UMC youth and Epworth won first place on scripture and Methodist History.

Youth took part in several City of Arlington 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parades over the years.

Under Susan McConnell the youth participated in a co-ed basketball church league as the Epworth Eagles.

Under Katy Chapman the Youth begin a tradition of celebrating Friendsgiving and inviting friends to celebrate a meal during the Thanksgiving holiday break. They would prepare the meal together and share fellowship.

#### **Youth In Mission (CTCYM)**

- 2010 - Broken Bow Oklahoma
- 2011 – Newton, Texas
- 2012 – Rogers, Arkansas
- 2013 – Sapulpa, Oklahoma
- 2014 – Batesville, Mississippi
- 2015 – Natchitoches, Louisiana
- 2016 – Fayetteville, Arkansas
- 2017 – Shawnee, Oklahoma
- 2018 – Tucumcari, New Mexico
- 2019 – Lake Jackson, Texas

**Softball** - Over the years Epworth has fielded some outstanding softball teams, some of them co-ed. Often this activity brought new members to Epworth. Many times, the team received the second-place city trophy in their class. In 1992 and 1994 they made it to the top and were city champs.

**Volleyball** - In the early 1980's, while Robert Herzig was pastor, Epworth had a volleyball league consisting of approximately eight teams. Games were played on the front lawn, now the space between the church building and Starbucks. And yes, it was full of sticker burs then too. Richard Ebsen was one of the team captains.

**Basketball** - For three seasons in the late 1960's Epworth fielded a city league basketball team. In order to have enough members, students from Texas Wesleyan in Fort Worth were recruited. According to city rules they did attend worship for the duration of the seasons.

**The Connexion** - The original Connexion was an after-school program started by then Youth director Todd Shipley, it was for high schoolers, primarily Arlington High, but open to all, for fun and fellowship. A place to hang out after school. It had a board of directors and was funded by donations. When Todd left Epworth, it ceased operation.

**Vacation Bible School** - Vacation Bible School has always been an important part of the ministry for children. In the beginning it followed the norm of the day; a week-long session, usually in the morning for children of all ages up to 6th grade.

In some later years it was held in the evening, sometimes with classes for adults. There have even been sessions on weekends from Friday night to Sunday morning; all day Saturdays; and one time an overnight lock in. Unfortunately, during COVID there was no gathering of children. It remains at this writing to see what happens next summer. Sabra Nesbit was overall the Best Bible Storyteller.

**Pickle Ball** - (2022) The latest thing. Lana Doggett organized this time together as one way of reconnecting after the pandemic. All ages can participate and enjoy fun and fellowship together.



**Arlington Life Shelter** - In 2020, the Family Life Center, along with the kitchen, was used as a temporary home for people of Arlington Life Shelter. Their building was under renovation. This continued into the early days of COVID. The church provided for meals, movie nights and games. Prior to COVID and including today, we provide periodic meals to ALS at their home site.

**Arlington Urban Ministries** - Arlington Urban Ministries was begun as a cooperative effort among Arlington Methodist Churches to provide for those with various needs to make their lives better. At an early time in AUM history, Epworth provided office space. We continue to contribute to their Nu2U resale shop, which helps fund their services. During our recent COVID period, our youths led a water and sport drinks drive for homeless that are served by AUM.

**Arlington Charities** - Adele Boliver was an early champion for Arlington Charities. AC provides a food and clothing source for those in need. They especially provide large scale services at Christmas, Thanksgiving and with school supplies each fall. During our recent COVID period, our youths and sponsoring adults volunteered time to help with distribution of food at their food pantry.

**Apartment Ministry** - At several different times in the history of Epworth we have reached out in differing ways to those in the apartments near to us and always strive to be in ministry to the resident in whatever way we can. In the late 1990's Epworth supplied sandwiches, cookies or brownies on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month for use by Rev. Nila Geisel of Arlington Urban Ministries in their apartment ministry.

**Feed Arlington** - Epworth's participation in the "Feed Arlington Campaign" began in 1990 under the leadership of Toby Linville. Epworth participated for at least 13 years. It was sponsored by the Post Office Workers and was a campaign to supply Arlington Charities food pantry.

**Missionary Support** - Starting in the 1960's and continuing for a number of years, Epworth fully supported a missionary, John Ed Francis and his wife Carolyn in their work in Okinawa. Again in 1993 we renewed our relationship with them on a shared basis with other churches.

**Feeding Students at the Wesley Foundation** - Over the years this has taken many forms; UMW ladies preparing and serving lunch; giving money for food; and in the 1970's a dedicated group of volunteers met at the Wesley at 6:15 am each Tuesday to prepare and serve breakfast prior to Bible study for students.

**Fisherman's Club.** During Rev. Clayton Lewis's time at Epworth besides the 60s Club support of a full-time missionary, there was a Fisherman's Club begun with the purpose of encouraging membership growth through fellowship and visitation. It was still strong in 1965. There is no mention as to whether the membership was co-ed or not. There was a very active Methodist Men's group.

**Tab for Ronald McDonald House** – Collecting drink can tabs was a special project started by Kevin Odom, one of our special-needs members, after he and his family stayed at the Ronald McDonald House on one of his many trips to the hospital. He collected, and reminded us to collect, for many years and after his death in 2022 the Special Connexion I, where he attended, decided to continue the work in his memory. **Look for the box shaped like a house to add your donation.**

**Box tops and Labels for Education** – For many years the UMW sponsored the collection of box tops and labels for education. It was supported by the whole congregation and continued until the program changed. Now you no longer collect the actual box tops and labels but you scan them. This makes it a more personal responsibility and is not currently being tracked by the UMW. Another way in which technology has caused the church to rethink the way we work in the world.

**Special Needs Hand Bell Group** – For several years, c. 2008, Nancy Bennett worked with the Connexion and formed a hand bell group. There were 10 to 12 ringers and they played for the church and in several locations outside the church including a Christmas concert in the lobby of Arlington Memorial Hospital.

**“The Well”** - February 12, 2012 was the first service of The Well, a contemporary worship *experiment*. The ‘preachers’ were to be Pastor Sarah Miller, Marianne Brown and Susan McConnell, in rotation. As with many experiments, it did not prove lasting. However, God saw an opportunity. Emily Stone, one of the youth was baptized at that first service.

**Music Camp** - for children ages third grade through sixth was held for two summers under the direction of Kirsten McCormick. It included appreciation, theory and performance, vocal and hand bells. The children also produced a musical. Camp was held in 2013 and 2014.

**Support for Glen Lake.** -Epworth has over the years supported Glen Lake Camp in various ways including work trips, supplying leaders for camps and in 1987 took part in a Conference Capitol Fund campaign to help purchase new land for the camp. The pledge was \$34,662.00 to be paid over three years.

**Rise Against Hunger** – This is/was a multigenerational project where bags of rice and dried vegetables were filled, sealed and boxed by members and friends of Epworth. All ages took part and there was fellowship as well as completing a mission project. The completed bags are sent around the world, including the US, many of them to schools where they know the food will get to needy families. Each bag will feed six persons as water is added and it is cooked.

**Bibles and Brews** – During the early part of Pastor Love’s service at Epworth he led a Bible study in one of the small local breweries in Arlington. It was attended by Epworth members and persons from outside our walls. Unfortunately, it ceased meeting due to COVID.

## VII. Ministers Called from Epworth

*“And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified”*  
*Romans 8:30*

**Donna Ware** – From 2016 retirement speech - From the time I was a little girl pretending to be a preacher with my dolls, and sometimes real children, in my back yard (on Bennett Street) and telling my big sisters’ stories about Jesus, I have felt a call to do something in the church. I hadn’t seen any women preachers but there were women missionaries so I thought that’s what I might do.

While at school at UT, in Austin, I met Janice Riggle Huie, now Bishop, and the feeling rekindled. Now that I knew there were women pastors, I enrolled at Perkins seminary, SMU and was ordained in. 1982.

I obviously did not become a missionary though when the Bishop told me my first appointment was Gorman/Desdemona/Hannibal I thought maybe I was. Then I found out they were in Texas. Besides this charge I also served as a Chaplin in a hospital in Amarillo, as an associate pastor and as Pastor in Charge at eight churches.

My favorite part is serving God through serving people – at births, deaths, weddings, baptisms, confirmations – shaking hands – any of the many ways to serve. Epworth was the first church in which I preached while in seminary. I have lots of good memories of Epworth.

**Nita Beaty** - Nita was wife of Pastor Richard Beaty. In 1977/78 she began her seminary studies for the ministry and was presented by the staff-Parish Committee as a candidate for ordained ministry. She was serving as Youth Minister at the time. She was ordained transitional deacon but did not complete ordination as elder.

**Nancy Bennett** – After answering God’s call in my teens I discovered the church was not ready for me, a girl, so I proceeded to be a good lay person as I was advised to do.

After joining Epworth in 1963, as a young adult with my husband Wayne, I was mentored by member Pat Halwes, who was Educational Director. At Epworth, I found direction for my earlier Diaconal Minister call and began work toward certification in Christian Education for Children, meanwhile teaching Sunday School and children’s choir.

Barely getting stated on the certification, I was recruited as Choir Director at Epworth (Undergraduate degree in Music Education) in 1983 and changed to Certification in Church Music. I earned an Associate in Church Music Certification at Perkins School of Theology, SMU in 1986. While in that process I felt called to work toward Consecration as Diaconal Minister, and began the required Foundational Studies at Perkins. I was consecrated in 1988.

With some hours towards a master’s degree I decided to enroll at Brite Divinity School, TCU, to complete requirements for MTS (Masters of Theological Studies). Before finishing my degree, I took a personal leave of absence from my choir job at Epworth. I graduated in 1992. In 1996 the Order of Permanent Deacon was authorized by the General Conference and I was ordained Deacon in Full Connection with the first class in June, 1997. I was hired by Epworth to work part time as Assistant to the Pastor, Barbara Lucas, I was also already working part time at St. Paul UMC in Hurst. That commitment ended in 2000. I decided to take retired status from both Epworth and the Conference. I retired from Epworth in January 2000 and from the Conference in June.

All of this could not have happened without the support and nurturing of the people of EUMC. Not only did Epworth support me in all of this, but at the same time Wayne and I were raising two daughters, Beverly (1965) and Elaine (1967), who thought Epworth was their second home. Today I remain at Epworth in retired status serving where I am needed as each new pastor arrives.

**Kevin Wilson** – I moved to Texas in January 1980. Within one week I found an apartment, registered for classes at UTA, found a job and connected with a new church, Epworth. A young adult class started the week before I visited. That class would become the Growing Christians Class. Through this class I developed strong relationships with people I still call friends today.

We shared in Sunday School, worship, softball, monthly gatherings, countless baby showers, and the ups and downs of life. In 1994 I responded to the call to ministry. I visited five different seminaries and chose Brite (TCU) because of the emotional and spiritual support of Epworth. Without that support, I’m not sure I would have made it through.

I entered Brite in 1995 and began the ordination process I 1996. During my senior year 1998-99, with Rev. Tim Boeglin’s mentorship, I became an intern pastor at Epworth. I helped in worship, made hospital visits, taught confirmation, and yes preached with about 30 minutes notice.

That year I also was an intern chaplain at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. I was traveling all over DFW, working long hours and not getting paid. Through the guidance of Tim Boeglin and Earlie Foster, Epworth gave me a ‘pounding’ of gas, groceries and food gift cards amounting to \$5000. This enabled me not to have financial concerns in my last year. When most Seminary graduates graduate with \$15,000 to \$30,000 debt, I graduated with TCU owing me \$50.

Even though I have gone on to serve 6 other churches, I have always felt a part of Epworth. I am so thankful that God directed me to the ministry and people of Epworth.

**Todd Shipley** – Entered into process and transferred to be ordained in the Disciples of Christ Tradition

**Marianne Brown-Trigg** – I started attending Epworth in 2007 when the Millers (Pastor Sarah and children) invited me to youth group. After seeing someone my age give testimony at a district youth rally, I preached my first sermon on Youth Sunday 2008. My brother Nico and I enjoyed youth mission trips, midwinter retreats at Glen Lake Camp, and helping with Vacation Bible School.

On July 4, 2010, I ‘walked the aisle’ and claimed my call to ministry. (Here I Am Lord playing and everything! Ha-ha). After growing up and growing into my call at Epworth, I graduated Brite and was Commissioned in June, 2019. I was ordained Full Elder in June 2021. I now serve the Wesley Foundation in Denton, Texas which ministers to UNT, TWU and the North Central Texas College.

**Katy Chapman** - Seventy years of ministry is a huge milestone for any church. As a fourth-generation member of a founding family of Epworth, I consider myself incredibly blessed to be called into that ministry and to serve here, at my home. Although I am technically a member of the Central Texas Conference, now, Epworth is “my” church. I have celebrated, mourned, laughed, and cried with my church family my whole life. There are so many breadcrumbs that come together to form who I am and why I am called into service.

Rather than go into every single story that knits itself into this narrative, I want to say thank you for the patience that all my teachers and leaders at Epworth have shown me. I am so thankful for your dedication in raising disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world.

In the summer of 2017, I was charged with heading up VBS. I was so excited to explore faith with our youngest disciples. But, we were in need of volunteers and the week we were scheduled to have classes was the time when most of the church had gone on summer holiday.

Someone suggested I talk with the Youth and see if they could volunteer to fill the need. They did, and went above and beyond. VBS was a blast! Fast forward a few months, Epworth was trying to maintain a Youth program without a leader in place. Gold stars go to the parents,

volunteers, and students that held the program together. I was attending sporadically at that time, but when I found out the Youth needed someone to step up for them, I called the SPRC chair immediately and said, “Here I am.” Within 48 hours, I was in a van with adult volunteers and a dozen students, headed to Glen Lake Camp.

A few months later, I was offered the job on a permanent basis. Youth leadership is a Chapman tradition or something. My family has no shortage of stories about volunteering with our Youth.

The summer of 2018 was my first venture into “mission tripping”. The Central Texas Conference tasked us with working in the small-but-mighty town of Tucumcari, located on historic Route 66 in New Mexico. I had never been on mission trip, but once I had, I couldn’t imagine life without this experience.

The following summer I was less green. Epworth had a group of 30 students and volunteers ready to serve in Lake Jackson, Texas. I was part of the leadership team for our living center and served as head cook. We had over 100 people staying at the living center. I unofficially became mother to 70 students and taught them to cook as they shared their experiences. They would arrive back after a long day, run to the kitchen, pick up a pan or peel a potato, and let me experience God through their eyes. As part of the programming, each church is given the opportunity to lead the message at evening worship. Our head pastor, Rev. Mike Love, said I should share my witness. You see, I saw God actively reclaim a lost sheep.

I lost a child in 2010 after a 44-day struggle to survive her premature birth. But God took that moment, that potential reason to run from faith, and God called out to my father, Bill Chapman. He hadn’t been to church in 20 years except for weddings and funerals. I found him on his knees, praying in the hospital chapel. He rarely missed a Sunday after that. If I wasn’t holding down my section of pew, I would get a lighthearted phone call to check in and softly ask why I missed church.

On Labor Day 2015, the roles were reversed, and I found myself on my knees in the hospital praying with him after he had a stroke. Pop had a tremendous uphill battle. But he never forgot how to bow his head and pray.

There I was in Lake Jackson. I witnessed in front of my students, other students, my church family, and colleagues. This incredible feeling started to overcome all of my anxiety, all of my doubts and fears. On our way home from closing worship, we blew out our second tire on the trailer. I was driving my personal vehicle and elected to stay with the trailer. I got under the fender to see what I could do to get this rig off the side of I-35. We had already endured a series of unfortunate events: A/C went out in one van, flat tires, and having to send my kids on to church without getting to see them off. Under the trailer, as cars whizzed by, everything around me slowed down. I heard God call my name.

Since that moment my church family has lovingly embraced my calling and lifted me up through the process of seminary and becoming a licensed local pastor.

**Eric Hunter** - became a member here while getting his undergraduate degree at UTA and is now a Global Missions Fellow with the UMC. He is assigned to Wesley Chapel in London, England and is planning to attend seminary for ordination in the UMC at a later time. (Note: Eric returned to the states and as of 2023 is enrolled in Seminary)

## **VIII. Personal Witness –**

***“... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8b (NIV-1985)***

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### **Edna Nanny –**

(as shared with Nancy Bennett on Thursday, June 30, 2022)

We purchased this house on Britany in 1959 and were painting the inside, it had been vacant for a year or two, when someone from the church dropped by. A day or two later the pastor, Rev. Clayton Lewis came by. We were still painting. We joined the church shortly after that. We being J. B., myself and our children Boyce, Michael and Charlotte.

I remember Bud and Gertrude Chapman working with the youth when the children were that age. One-time Gertrude helped me and we moved all the furniture out of the living room and set up a Chinese (Japanese) Tea party for the youth. Granny Elder was also a big part of Epworth. The family now consists of me, in the same house, Michael who lives not too far and Charlotte who lives with her husband in Mexico. I also have grandchildren. (Some of whom she helped raise)

I remember sometime when the church assigned Shepherds to us and Jill Wilson was assigned to me. She brought me books which I still treasure.

(Note from Nancy) Edna is one of our 90+ year olds – 95 by the time this goes to press. She lives alone with meals on wheels service and visits from her children. She also has a wonderful little doggy friend. When I was there on this date Charlotte had come but had been exposed to COVID after she arrived in Fort Worth to pick up her car so she couldn't visit. Edna's eye sight is failing but she can still read with a light and magnifier. I never visit without coming away feeling better than when I arrived.

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**How the Ebsen Family arrived at Epworth and stayed.** - Around 1979 I (Richard) was asked to bid on redoing the inside and outside of the Epworth church building. My company (Richard is a painting contractor) was awarded the contract to texture and paint walls in the Sunday school hall to cover up the smell of what it used to be used for - "FFA for Arlington High School" (farm animals). It worked, and the rest of the building was painted in and out.

While we were working there I heard Nancy Bennett talking to someone about re-roofing the building in the back. (The Connexion). I found out that this would be accomplished by the men of the church while the ladies of the church prepared food for all. I liked the idea of members helping take care of their church and asked if I could help. Nancy said sure and I was hooked and started bringing the family to church and Donna and I have been here ever since. I personally have several families: My immediate family; my church family; my chorus family and my golf family and they are all special to me. I pray for our church often and hope it continues long after I'm gone. May God continue to bless us here at Epworth.

**Richard Ebsen 8/2022** - In 1984 Donna and Richard went on the work mission trip to 4 Corners/Shiprock, New Mexico. This is their story of that trip.

What a wonderful experience. Our whole group of volunteers worked together to help build a parsonage in Shiprock. My God felt moment occurred when we gathered in a circle and prayed with the Indian people living there, taking communion with them and then enjoying some of their Navajo Indian tacos. Another God moment occurred on our way home when our trailer came loose from our R. V. as we were slowing down in a town and almost passed us on the right. It slid to a stop without damage to anyone or anything. A third happened later before we arrived home when we stopped and enjoyed a double rainbow. We felt blessed and thought maybe this was God's way of thanking us for our work in Shiprock. God is good."

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**Bob & Linda Crosby & Mark Hurley** ....our story and beginnings with Epworth UMC

Mark and my connection with Epworth actually began in the late 90's with Lawrence and Mary Odom, who were already members, but at this time in our lives we and other parents were trying to figure out what our young adult children with special needs were going to do to remain active with their friends and community after graduating from Special Education in the school systems. For Mark that was 1997.

Consequently, Advocates for Special People was started in October 1997 from some of those early meetings at Epworth and for 11 years Lawrence Odom served as President and I was the secretary of the organization. We started at Epworth with our meetings, parties, practicing for our Special Olympic competition and in 2003 opened our first Special Connexion day program in the house behind the church. Epworth members and families have always been so loving and supportive of our special need adults and after 25 years continue this love and support.

Mark and I had visited other churches in Arlington but at the time, I had not felt the supportive connection that we felt at Epworth....Now for the rest of the story.

In 2005, I was working for Bob Crosby in the office and had worked with him for 22 years in his heating/air conditioning business. Bob also got my oldest son, Michael, Mark's brother, interested in HVAC and he was working for Bob. In February, 2005, Bob's company merged with another air conditioning company in Garland. As we were signing papers for this change in business and location, Bob received a call from his wife Beverly and she had been diagnosed late stage thyroid cancer. So begins 2005.

In 2005 my mother was 94 and having health issues. In June 2005, she died and two weeks later Bob's wife Beverly died. In July 2005, I was let go from the new air conditioning company. First job I ever lost. In

August 2005, I was diagnosed with colon cancer; had surgery the next month, and would be starting radiation in October 2005.

Mark and I were attending Epworth on a regular basis, but had not officially joined. After his wife died, we invited Bob to Epworth and he finally came one Sunday. We were both still emotional over the loss of our loved ones and some song sung at church or some part of the sermon would always make us tear up.

On October 2, 2005, Mark and I had not talked about it but I turned and ask him if he wanted to join Epworth today and he nodded yes. We had not talked to Pastor Sarah about joining or Mark being baptized but we went up front anyway and Bob came up to join as well.

One of my most precious memories of this day in joining Epworth and Mark being baptized is when Pastor Sarah asked Mark if he knew what being baptized meant. Mark knew the answer. He said "Jesus" and when we turned, from our viewpoint, it looked like the whole congregation was standing with us in love and support. I still cry thinking about it and it's been 17 years ago now.

We have many memories at Epworth UMC...like a "surprise" bridal shower and a wedding on May 20, 2006 when Bob and I married at Epworth with all our families, church family, Advocates for Special People family, and friends present. Mark was Bob's best man and my son, Michael, gave me away.

We have so many memories at Epworth and hope to have many more. Thank you, God, for our many Epworth blessings.

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**Jeanette Davis Brugh** writes - My parents, Bill and Betty Davis joined the church around 1957. They raised 3 children and 3 of their grandchildren in the church. Bill was part of the UMM (United Methodist Men) group. He was also very supportive of the Scouts, at one time endowing a special account to be used for scouting as long as Epworth sponsored a group. Betty taught Sunday school and was in

UMW (United Methodist Women), and volunteered in a lot of areas. She was also den mother to the Cub Scouts for her boys. Bill and Betty were faithful members of the Friendship Sunday school class.

I was married in the church in 1985 and then 1988 to Kirk Brugh. The church helped me be able to fulfill my dream of working with children. I worked in the nursery for a few years while my kids were young. Then co-taught Sunday school classes for the K-2 grades for 7 years, helped with Discovery Club for a few summers and VBS for a lot of years. I really enjoyed teaching kids and helping them learn about God.

This in turn led me to coaching 3 soccer teams and volunteering for the Arlington Soccer Association with my husband Kirk. We have volunteered with the Association since 1991- to present. We like helping the Association give a place for kids to play and learn soccer.

The church also sponsored the Cub Scout Pack and Boy Scout Troop that Kirk and I ~~both~~ started. Both of our sons received their Eagles Scout Award. These scouts also planted the oak trees on the north of the back parking lot. They were just small starters at the time.

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**Beverly Bennett** wrote - Like many of us second generation Epworth members, my Epworth story starts with my birth.

My parents (Nancy and Wayne Bennett) were already members here when I was born, and my baby book reads like a who's who of Epworth members when you look at the visitors and gifts pages. I have a bloodline family tree and an Epworth family tree. I don't remember a time when Epworth wasn't in my story.

I first walked chasing after Lisa Odom who had a toy I wanted, and depending on who is telling the story, it was either at a Sunday School class party or in the nursery. My Sunday School was in the hall where the Choir room is now and there was a small stage in that Choir room.

I went to kindergarten here, in the room next to the Coke machine. My youth group met in what is now the Worship storage closet and there was a door into what was the Fellowship Hall after it moved from the building out back where the big cast iron stove was. When I was asked to write my story, all these things crowded into my head trying to write themselves into it. “Remember me?”

But that’s not really my story, it’s just my memories of a life spent in the family tree of Epworth, where the trunk was old and solid, and the bigger branches were always there to spread their arms out in a protective and supporting circle for us smaller ones.

I learned about Jesus and God and the Bible, that’s what you do at church. But I also learned about love and joy and sorrow and faith and giving and helping others. I learned that I was part of something bigger than just our place of worship. I guess I didn’t so much learn it, I just absorbed it as it was being lived all around me. Wherever there was a need, there was someone there to fill it. A hurt, a sorrow, someone was there to help heal it. A joy – oh those joyous celebrations! Faith poured out of this building in waves to places far from here as mission teams went out to give to others of their talents. You didn’t need to “belong” to be loved, and helped and prayed for – it didn’t matter.

I just accepted that was how church worked for everyone, until I visited a friend’s church in Oklahoma in my teens. I wasn’t allowed to take Communion! WHAT WAS THIS? (I’d unknowingly already broken the “thou shalt not take Communion unless thou art a member of our church” rule in a different denomination as a child in Arizona, I was taught “Jesus Bread” was for everyone, so I took it!) I came home asking A LOT of questions. How can they do that, why would they do that? It was the first time I’d knowingly been in contact with a church that didn’t open its arms to everyone, and I didn’t like it.

About that time, I also started questioning some things. I didn’t stop believing in God and Jesus and Faith, in general, it was just little things that bothered me about “how” and “why” and “what if”, things I think many teenagers go through. I left Epworth for a time, at least on Sunday

mornings. I don’t think I ever really left its shelter, because I was still very much connected by love, I just didn’t connect to it on a spiritual level at that time. I’m sure many second, third and even fourth generation Epworth “kids” have all been through that stage.

I eventually came back “home” on Sunday mornings, I don’t even remember how long the period was because I still attended picnics and church suppers and other gatherings. I’d never even considered going to another church on Sundays anyway, actual church wasn’t the problem as it turned out. I’d needed time to gather my thoughts and find answers to those questions. I’m still not sure I’ve found them all, but I learned that being away from church wasn’t going to help me find them. Asking questions of those older and wiser than myself, and those who had been schooled in Theology was! Sometimes asking those questions has put me at odds with my church family or a Pastor, but always the love and support has been there. Even if we’ve had to agree to disagree.

In 1996 I left Epworth again, but this time it was because I married and left the country, I went to Canada since the man I married was Canadian. Did you know there are NO Methodists in Canada? I didn’t! My (now-ex) husband was an Agnostic and for the years I was up there I was never able to find a church home, though I tried, no church I visited ever felt “right”. I missed my Epworth family and my church home badly, but knew I was being held in prayer and love by that family every day.

While I don’t think God had anything to do with my subsequent divorce, I do know that the prayer and love from our Epworth family was certainly where I got so much of the strength it took to bring my boys (Nicholas Peyton born in 1998 and Michael Martin born in 2001) and I back home to Texas in 2006. I never questioned that we WOULD come home and that a loving family, both blood and church would be here to support us.

The Epworth family wrapped their arms around my boys when we returned and began a third generation of love and joy and sorrow and faith and giving and helping others. I am now one of the “bigger branches” I mentioned above, sheltering, and nurturing those smaller



ones like those who came before me. I hope I can show them how church is meant to be lived in the world - the way I was shown. Beverly Bennett 7/2022

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**Patricia (Pat) Hayes** - and I joined Epworth in October 1957. Suzanne, our daughter was eighteen months old and we had Kayla in November, 1958. I have been a member for sixty-five years. I was a member of the choir until 2013. I taught Sunday School class in the Children's Department for fifteen years. I am a member of the United Methodist Women.

In the early 1970's I was volunteering in the office. Our secretary resigned and I was asked to fill in until one could be hired. I filled in for fourteen years, until Charles and I moved to Parker County. We continued to be active members because we loved our Church family. (They subsequently moved to Mansfield where Pat lives today) Kayla and Vernon married at Epworth November, 1980 and Suzanne and John married at Epworth, October 1985. Charles and I celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, January, 2001, with a reception at Epworth.

**I BELIEVE in PRAYER!! I BELIEVE in MIRACLES!!!**

Kayla had a car accident and was air-lifted to the trauma Unit at Harris Methodist Hospital in Fort Worth with a traumatic head injury. She was there for three months. The members of Epworth were so good and supportive of us. They came to the hospital, brought snacks, took us out to eat, called and sent cards – but best of all they were prayer warriors for her recovery. Due to God, the prayers, and the doctors she made a full recovery. She is our MIRACLE!

I miss coming to church, but due to health problems it is easier to stay connected on line. I love my church family and miss seeing all of you. My love and prayers, Pat Hayes

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**From Joan Auld** - There is a saying that the best part of any journey is the destination. For some, this may be very true, but for me, it is the

people you meet along the way! Throughout my life I have journeyed through many church “homes” and have met some of the most amazing church “family” members; most who continue to be close and dear friends of mine to this day.

My husband Jim and I moved to Arlington in January 2019, to be closer to his youngest son who would be readily available to assist me with Jim's daily care. Jim had been bravely battling Stage 4 Lung Cancer for six years, and it was difficult for our son to visit with us as we lived six hours away at the time, and our other Sons were even further away! It was important for us to find a small church family to establish a relationship with before Jim's passing. We tried several churches in the area and one Sunday, out of the blue, we chose Epworth UMC. At the time Epworth UMC was between pastors and various leaders/speakers would deliver the message each Sunday.

Not long after we started attending Epworth UMC, Pastor Mike Love and his wife Susan were appointed to Epworth UMC and graciously welcomed Jim and I warmly, and visited us in our home frequently. Pastor Mike and Susan continued to bless all of us abundantly during their service at Epworth UMC, until his retirement in 2022.

Jim passed in July 2019, six months after moving to Arlington and two months after becoming a member of Epworth UMC. I am grateful that God placed Pastor Mike and Epworth UMC in Jim's life for that short period of time to be with him and to guide him to his heavenly home. Pastor Mike and Jim built a strong friendship in a short period of time, and I know the Holy Spirit was with them through the good and bad times.

I am glad Jim and I chose to become members of Epworth UMC. It provides a warm, welcoming atmosphere and is mighty in spirit! I am looking forward to what God has in store for Epworth for the next 70 years!

I don't have to “Come Home”, I am already there!  
In His grace, Joan E Auld

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**Susanne Winter** - It was May 1977 when I came to Epworth. My daughter was 6 weeks old and I knew I needed to reconnect to the Church.

Either Charles Braddock or Lawrence Odom met me at the door, introduced himself and led me to a Sunday school class. I was introduced to the class and sat down. Looking around me I was aware of an age disparity between me and the class. I had been taken to the high school class! Even so, the class was very nice and someone led me to a more age-appropriate class. During the last 45 years I've had more children and grandchildren. All were baptized at Epworth.

Thank you, Epworth, for continuing to teach me to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.  
Suzanne Winter

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**Diana Decker** wondered: - Where can I go to college and have a great opportunity to get a job upon graduation? Why UTA of course, so I moved to Texas without really knowing anyone. I transferred from University of Southwestern Louisiana where I had been active at the Wesley United Campus Ministry, so naturally I wandered over to the UTA Wesley Foundation. There I met the Pastor, Admin, and many students. Elaine (Bennett) Johnson, Jenny Blankenship, and Mike Brown all invited me to Sunday School and worship at Epworth. I was welcomed right away in Fall 1988. I did visit a couple other larger churches, but did not have that same feeling. Also, one of them did not have any UTA students attending the church.

I joined the church in Spring 1989. Randy Keck, Jenny's husband, and Rev Norman taught Sunday School in that area that was right outside the Pastor's office and then we needed more room. After college graduation in 1991, several of us joined Richard Ebsen's Sunday class where we dove through the book of Daniel, swung the hammer to hang drywall for Habitat for Humanity, and sang (some better than others) Christmas carols in the neighborhood spreading the love of Jesus. It was

incredible to experience the spirit of the Lord in so many ways and share it with others!

Ding-dong the wedding bells are ringing! Eric and I were married by a former Epworth pastor at Polytechnic United Methodist Church. Weddings can be stressful and we had a couple challenges on March 30, 1996, but Rev. Norman said that I seemed very calm in the midst of it. I felt that peace and God was with us as we united as one.

(Not sure that many know this story. I also need to check, as I am not sure if Suzanne Winters was on the Epiphany with us.)

"Please walk through these metal detectors" asked the guards at the Gainesville juvenile correctional facility. Rev. Tim Boeglin, Kevin Wilson (now Rev. Kevin), and I participated in the first Epiphany at the Gainesville State School. Epiphany is modeled after the Walk to Emmaus and shares God's love, forgiveness, and grace with incarcerated juveniles, called "stars". It was incredible to meet with our stars and share God's forgiveness and love through various activities. As I recall, we had worship each night. I prayed for my star and all the stars and our amazing Epiphany team. The last night I asked Rev. Tim to pray with me. I silently prayed that if it was God's will, I would like to get pregnant and have a baby. We will skip the specifics, but I was pregnant within a few weeks of this worship and Epiphany! That was likely another reason why I was so calm and at peace when Jason was born those months later. It was my answered Epiphany prayer coming to life!

2000 - I was 5 ½ weeks from the due date of my first child and not feeling well at work. I went to my doctor who sent me to the hospital. This perky OB Gyn sat on my bed and said we are having this baby! I said no, not for another 5 ½ weeks! She said I thought it was 3 ½ weeks from your due date. No, it was 5 ½ weeks per latest sonogram. I had preeclampsia and the baby needed to be born now. Yikes!

We prayed. They induced and nothing. The next day nothing. Dr. Parrill got off at 7 AM the next morning and she said we would have this baby before then. Prayers were answered and Jason Charles Decker was born at 4 am on September 27, 2000 weighing 5 pounds 2 ounces 19.5 inches long. He was big for being 5 weeks early! I said “He’s out? I thought that was just the head!” I had a regular delivery and then they rushed my precious boy to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). This is when even more intense prayers began. That morning we called the church. Rev. Tim Boeglin was leading a bible study and we told them about Jason being born so early. They all went to the chancel rail and prayed. Rev. Tim came to the hospital and prayed over Jason. The first few days were pretty scary yet I remember Sue Braddock and others telling me how calm and at peace I seemed. It was in God’s hands and I really felt a warmth inside me. I knew Jason would be fine. I have felt God’s presence before, but nothing like I did when Jason was in the NICU for 14 days. God was there for me and my family. He enveloped us, as did our amazing Epworth family with baby shower, food, visits, and prayers!

When Eric went to bed that night October 20, 2002, I said this 2<sup>nd</sup> baby is coming. I could not sleep of course so I wrote thank you notes for baby gifts until those contractions started coming. I woke up Eric and Jason and we headed to the hospital. Ryan Lewis Decker was born 2 days early on October 21, 2002 at 7:18 AM and was 20 ½ inches long and weighed 7 pounds 10 ounces. While I was in Arlington Memorial Hospital, Elaine (Bennett) Johnson was also there and pregnant. Her son arrived over a month later! We also received a visit from another church member that was in the hospital, Earlie Foster. Gavin Morris, Ruth Ann Freeman’s grandson, was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup>! God was watching over all of us Epworth members!

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**David Doggett** - In 2014 I was sitting comfortably in my chair at an Ad Council meeting and one of the advisors we were working with at the time said the Youth needed adult volunteers to go on Mission trip. If they did not get more volunteers then they could not go. As I was sitting there something told me that I needed to volunteer to go!! I had never

been on a Youth Mission trip but they needed people and I was being called to go and help. So, I raised my hand and said I will go!!

That first Mission trip was quite an experience. On the second day of work our client’s Son passed away while we were there working at the house. I’m on my second day and just getting started with this group of kids that I have “adopted” for the week and now a real-life situation comes up that no one is expecting. We carried on working and brought food to help the family thru this difficult situation and realized that we were sent by GOD to be in Natchitoches to help this family!! That first trip was a memory that I will never forget.

In 2016 our adventures took us to Fayetteville, Arkansas and this was the year that “Elsa & Jerry” made a grand appearance. When you are on a mission trip and bonding with your adopted family for the week, you will do some things that might be slightly out of your comfort zone. In fact, there’s some things you do that ONLY could happen on a mission trip!!

In 2017 our services were needed in Shawnee, Oklahoma... SALUTE!! This team was absolutely incredible with all the work we accomplished!! We completed 5 projects in 5 days.

In 2018 we headed west to Tucumcari, New Mexico. This was a LONG drive with way too much loud music that I was very unfamiliar with.

In 2019 we stayed within TEXAS to help those affected by the hurricanes and went to Lake Jackson. This could best be titled as the Hot Mess Express!! On day 2 the AC went out in the van and our only means of cooling was a 20” box fan from Walmart!! Little did we know that with COVID in 2020, this would be our last mission trip for a while.

After 5 mission trips you really appreciate some of the simple things in life...like a hot shower without someone telling you it’s time to get out, A/C that you can control and last but not least the comforts of your bed vs a cot !!

The BEST thing I watched in the 5 years was the transforming of Epworth Youth. They went from being awkward early teens in Junior High to more responsible Young Adults that were headed off to college!! I also witnessed the conviction they had to GOD and Epworth and heard some incredible testimonies about their Faith Journey.

I personally found this to be very rewarding in my faith journey and have met some absolutely incredible people along the way. Who would have known that saying “YES I will go” back in 2014 would take me on such an incredible adventure.

David Doggett

## **IX. Pastors Appointed to Epworth**

*“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isiah 6: 8*

### **Senior Pastors**

- 1) Rev. Paul Wiseman from 1952-1954 – Built a church out of a barn
- 2) Rev. Ernest Dewald from 1954-1957 – Began the south side expansion
- 3) Rev. Henry Price from 1957-1960- Saw the north side expansion to completion
- 4) Rev. Alton Ferrill from 1960-1962
- 5) Rev. Clayton Lewis from 1962-1966 – While pastor at Epworth Rev. Lewis was selected for a one-month evangelistic mission in Uruguay and Argentina.
- 6) Rev. Jake Shelly from 1966-1972 - Social justice was a major emphasis during Rev Shelly’s time at Epworth. For the first time several Methodist Churches in Arlington worked together on the PEP Program
- 7) Rev. John Basham from 1972-1975 – Social concerns continued to be in the forefront and Contact Teleministries was formed.
- 8) Rev. Richard Beaty from 1976-1979 – Began children’s time in the morning worship
- 9) Rev. Bob Sanders from 1980-1982 – Began the custom of Thanksgiving Dinner at the church on the Sunday nearest the holiday. In a summer exchange program in 1981 the Sanders family journeyed to Blackburn, England, for six weeks and The Reverend Colin Nowel and family came to Epworth.
- 10) Rev. Robert Herzig from 1982-1987 – Rev Herzig completed his Doctoral work and became Dr. Herzig while here.
- 11) Rev. Neil Norman 1987-1993 – Brought a new revitalization to Epworth
- 12) Rev. Dr. Barbara B. Lucas from 1993-1995

- 13) Rev. Joseph F. Larson from 1995-1998
- 14) Rev. Timothy Boeglin from 1998-2003
- 15) John Clifford from 2003 – 2005
- 16) Rev. Sarah Howe Miller from 2005 – 2012 – Reinvigorated and enlarged the youth group She also received her Doctorate while at Epworth and became Dr. Sarah Miller
- 17) Rev. James Ballard from 2012 – 2014
- 18) Rev. Sheila Fiorella from 2014-2017
- 19) Rev. Mike Love from 2018-2022 – Helped safely navigate Epworth through the major part of COVID-19
- 20) Rev. Brandie Spletzer from 2022 – Present

#### **Associate Pastors**

- 1) Associate – Rev. Roy Bassett from (1965-1966)
- 2) Summer Exchange from England – Rev. Colin Nowel (1981)
- 3) Assistant to the Pastor – Rev. Nancy Bennett from 1997-2000
- 4) Associate – Rev. Kate Chapman from 2021 – Present

#### **Those who served with their Pastor spouses**

Dorothy Wiseman  
 Ophelia DeWald  
 Irene Price  
 Iva Ree Price  
 Jean Lewis  
 Bonnie Shelly  
 JoAnn Basham  
 Nita Beaty  
 Lucille Sanders  
 Gail Herzig  
 Patrice Norman  
 Wayne Lucas  
 Aleta Larson  
 Suzie Boeglin – also a Pastor at New World  
 Bertie Clifford  
 Shelley Ballard  
 Russ Fiorella  
 Susan Love  
 Matt Spletzer  
 Mary Bassett  
 Janet Nowel  
 Wayne Bennett

## X. Did You Know?

*Interesting Facts about Epworth that you may or may not be aware of, and if we left out your favorite let us know.*

**FFA Barn** - The original building on the property was an FFA Barn with block walls and a dirt floor. No record has been kept as to whether it had any sort of interior walls or stalls. The roof was gabled and probably open all the way up. There are currently three ceilings in that part of the building. Each time it was remodeled it received a new ceiling for some reason.

**Pipe Organ** – The pipe organ was rescued from an adult movie theater in Dallas by Wesley Stewart, choir director at the time and the men of Epworth. Installation was begun in 1977 and the acoustical tiles were removed from the sanctuary ceiling for better acoustics. Pipes were installed in the balcony and on each side of the chancel area in the small rooms. The installation took a long period of time. It was dedicated on September 12, 1982.

**Bell Tower and Carillon** – Beginning in September 1995 plans were put in place to complete the bell tower and carillon from plans made when the Family Life Center was begun. The Open Door Sunday School Class supervised this completion with Stan Dimmick as the chairman of the project. The tower and carillon were finished in September of 1997 with the formal dedication being held on December 14, 1997.

**Choir Loft** - What is now the balcony full of organ pipes was built as the choir loft. The choir was moved to the front of the church during the first renovation of the sanctuary. It now is used as a camera location to film our worship service for on line followers.

**Small Cross Grouping** - in the Narthex/Gathering Space is made up of crosses carefully chosen by families or individuals who were active

at the time the area was redesigned in the early 2000's. There are names and messages on the backs of many of them.

**Hand bells** – In 1988 two hand bell choirs were begun by then choir director, Nancy Bennett. A two-octave set of bells having been given in the name of Gertrude Chapman. They were dedicated on July 30. A third octave was added later.

**Windows in original section** – When the barn was originally converted stained glass windows taken from First United Methodist were donated. They can still be seen in some classrooms though none are visible from the outside.

**Mortgage Burning** - On November 23, 1975, church members climaxed a Thanksgiving Celebration with the burning of the mortgage note on their \$300,000 building. This happened in the sanctuary at the end of worship.

**Library** - In December 1960 a committee was formed to plan a library. The WSCS provided funds for the initial purchase of books. And members were encouraged to donate funds also. The original library occupied the area that had been the kitchen and one of the classrooms in the original south end of the building, the kitchen by now having been moved to the new back building. The present location was selected when the south end was converted back into classrooms for nursery and pre-school aged children. Charlyne Cook was largely responsible for shelving and organization in memory of her husband Clint.

**Back-Porch Band** – During part of the time that Kirsten McCormick was choir director Epworth had a pick-up band which we called ‘The Back-Porch Band’ It was composed of stringed instruments ranging from a guitar to a dulcimer, with a stand-up Bass, violin and autoharp in-between. We also had some rhythm percussion instruments. The band played for the church picnic, worship services and one time went on the road to perform in De Soto. Our music was varied and most of the instrumentalists also provided vocal accompaniment.

**Musical Theater at Epworth** - also happened under the direction of Kirsten McCormick. Epworth presented full presentations of Broadway musicals in the sanctuary, with available lighting and sound. (At the time the two front rows of lights were dimmable.) They were free to the public; a love offering was taken to help pay for the rights to produce. Members of Epworth, with the help of many friends, made it possible. Productions included “*Godspell*” (twice), “*Jayne Eyre*,” and “*Songs for a New World*” in full with concert versions of “*Le Misérables*” and ‘*Heroes and Villains*’, which was made up from excerpts from several different sources. The platform in the choir area was an attic in *Jayne Eyre* and a cliff in *Les Misérables*.

**“Wesley Christmas Madrigal”** - On October 26, 27 of 1984 Council on Ministries members spent time at Glen Lake Camp making plans for the months ahead. One of the events was to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Methodism. This was done on December 16 with a dinner and program. *The Wesley Christmas Madrigal* was performed by church members in costumes of the Wesleyan period, along with the choir, to the obvious enjoyment of the audience. Stan Dimmick was the overall director of the project.

**Blood Pressure Checks** – Begun in the 1980’s, Bill Nesbit was available to check blood-pressure on Sunday Mornings for many years. In 2006 it was being offered by Karen Marrow. This was a helpful service to many.

**Church Picnic** – The first church picnic was held on September 18, 1988. It was held on the home property of the Ashworth family. This property was later developed into home sites and the picnic moved to Veteran’s Park, at least in 2006, then Stovall Park before coming home to Epworth. It has been and is a time of food, fellowship and fun. There were two years during the COVID pandemic when it was not held but the first one back saw the Pastor Mike Love taking pies in the face for Hager’s Heart.

**Prime-Timers** – In 1988 a group who called themselves ‘the prime Timers’ was formed. It was an activity group for those 55 years young and counting. This group met monthly and their activities including lunch, in or out, day trips and game playing.

**Children’s Church** – In the second year of the church, the Children’s Church project began with Walter Turner as the leader and Lois Bennett as leader of the Children’s Choir. The children began their worship in the sanctuary but left and reassembled in the frame building west of the main building for their service. When the north wing was added, the room on the west end was built for children’s church complete with pews and pulpit. The children came into the main sanctuary for communion. This program continued until 1970. The room was converted into a class room in 1976.

**Children Time** – After Pastor Richard Beaty came (1976) he began the children’s story portion of the Sunday service. His stories put the scripture for the day into the modern vernacular making them easy for the children to relate to the story. The adults also enjoyed these stories.

**The Builders Class** was the first organized Sunday School class created as the church was forming.

**The Keystone Sunday School Class (1953)** was a major factor in the life of Epworth from the early days until close to the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Notable names: Hayes, Morris, Chapman, Kirkpatrick, Moore, LaBella, and Nesbitt). when it merged with the Friendship class and became called, among members, the Friendly Keystone class”. (Remembered names from the Friendship class: Braddock, Bailey, Davis, Foster)

As the Keystone class, it was very active in the life of the church and also enjoyed group outings and parties. One trip was a bus tour to Eureka Springs, Arkansas to see the Passion Play. Some of the members belonged to a camping club which always had a Sunday morning Devotional time while camping.

**The Open Door Sunday School Class** was formed sometime in 1975/76 when Mary and Lawrence Odom and Stan Dimmick, then members of the Upper Room Class, decided a new class was needed for persons who did not attend any of the current classes. Wayne and Nancy Bennett and Charles and Clydene Doggett helped form the Open Door Class. It was so called because it met in the room behind the sanctuary, Now the A/V room, which had no doors. The class would be open to all ages and marital status. Stan Dimmick led the class until 1985. Wayne Bennett then volunteered to lead and did so for more than 25 years, holding the record for longest class leader.

The class is now led by Frank Banell .For many years they supported an angel for the “Angel Tree” and currently provide a meal for the Arlington Life Shelter in rotation with other classes. (Notable names that have called the class home over the years in addition to those already mentioned: The Don Carpenters, the Gaylen Carpenters, Everhard, Caulfield, Boliver, Beede, Arthurs, Crosby, and Caufield.) Members Beverly and Don Carpenter left this class to help form a new class, the Growing Christians. An earlier Open Door Class was established in 1955 and closed well before this one started.

**In 1977 Epworth had its first Christmon Tree.** This began a new custom of decorating the church for the Advent season. On the Saturday prior to the first Sunday in Advent the Sanctuary was decorated, and on the first Sunday evening of Advent the children decorated their classrooms. This was followed by a special program for all in the sanctuary. The current Christmons were hand made by a member.

**Thanksgiving Dinner** Our custom of Thanksgiving dinner at the church on the Sunday nearest the holiday was begun in 1980. It was originally called Thanks Living Dinner to coincide with a special Thanks Living offering taken at the time.

**Land Sales** The original property extended east to Cooper Street. In 1987 and in 1995 portions were sold for the expansion of the street. Part of this money was set aside in reserve for a new sign on the front

of the property when the road construction was complete. In 1997, as the Cooper Street construction was just beginning and since we had no front sign, a large Cross and Flame with our name was placed on the side of the Family Life Center. Sometime prior to 2006 the decision was made to sell the front part of the property to a commercial company. This helped a great deal in paying for the Family Life Center. Epworth retained the driveway and small strip on the south of that. We also still had access through the shopping center off of Park Row. Unfortunately, we lost this, though not our doing, in 2021, except on Sunday Mornings.

**E.A.T.** ‘Epworth All Together’ became a part of the program at Epworth around 1995. This was a time set aside every second Sunday evening for a meal, study, fellowship, or any program for the entire church, with the goal of providing a time for the entire church to gather other than the hour of worship. It was used often by work areas of the Council on Ministries and other groups within the church.

**Current Piano and Organ** Insurance moneys (after the storm) and diligent effort led to replacement of the old piano with a beautiful small grand piano and an Allen electronic organ. The opportunity for the organ came about because the pastor, Joe Larson, knew an Allen representative who just happened to need an organ built for the Boston Symphony to use at a performance in Fort Worth. They would not build the organ until they had a buyer and it had to be sold as a used organ. They, the Allen Company, added several extras to entice us.

We now have a very fine instrument which was installed in February 1996. The piano was purchased from a UTA grad who had two and needed to sell one to continue his performance education on the piano. It, too, is a very fine instrument. In June, 1996, the renewed sanctuary, piano and organ were dedicated by the District Superintendent, Dr. James Porter during morning worship.



**Family Life Kitchen** While the building itself was commercially done, the kitchen interior was built by members of the Keystone class, including Bud Chapman and Charles Hayes. The cabinet doors were provided by Lawrence Odom. The result is many spacious cabinets and work areas with electricity provided in the large center island.

**Epworth had a Van** In 1990, after a six-month fund-raising effort a van was purchased. A large gift soon after the van was obtained paid the balance in record time. The make and model are not recorded.

**Stormy Weather** - The storm mentioned elsewhere in this book happened on Sunday evening, August 20, 1995. It was an isolated storm with winds from the east. It lifted a large section of the sanctuary roof and flipped it through the air, driving it through the glass front of the narthex. A hard-working group of volunteers manned the mops, brooms and buckets to remove a flood of water from the sanctuary and narthex. Items damaged beyond repair included the piano organ, choir pews, all carpeting and lighting as well as a few hymnals. (The choir claimed no responsibility for the flood even though they had sung “Deep River” for the morning anthem, and an excited Marvin Goad, music director at the time, discovered the damage.)

**Epworth’s Vineyard** - For a part of Epworth’s history we had a vineyard, of sorts. wild grapes were allowed to grow on the south fence and Bill Davis harvested them every year and made jelly, which he shared.

## **XI. Final Word**

*There is never a final word, for time marches on, so take note of what happens and where we go from here, so we will be ready for the next edition.*

Pastor Mike Love was assigned to Epworth in June of 2018. We were just getting acquainted and beginning our ministry together when a worldwide Coronavirus pandemic shut us and everyone and thing else down; businesses, schools, churches, towns. And God’s earth breathed, because the smog and pollution went away, at least for a while.

The COVID situation disrupted things at Epworth. The good news is that Epworth people worked together to establish best practices. Stream worship became a regular activity and invited people from all over the U. S. into worship. We began the very first Sunday with a phone on a tripod, a small vignette made up of the large cross and a music stand for the preacher. This situation later improved.

Zoom meetings became possible for the Administrative Council meetings, special meetings, prayer time and small group meetings. We even used streaming (Facebook Live) for a church wide teaching on Discipleship.

When the COVID concerns hit Epworth, we formed a committee made up of worship, Admin Council Chair, Lay Leader and Trustees to work on guidelines. In the words of many, this was “unprecedented times”. We put together guidelines of hygiene based on CDC guidelines. My concerns (Pastor Mike) were about getting the most current information to make educated decisions. We also put together a plan for streaming worship. In the beginning the guidelines were approved by the Admin. Council. Later on, as we knew more, we decided that the Pastor along with the Trustee Chair, Admin. Council Chair and Lay Leader could make the necessary decisions.

When the number of cases began to decrease and we began to better understand the situation, we established guidelines for people to come back to worship and Sunday School. To date (October 2022) we still have distancing and mask guidelines.

Having a time together for worship was the first priority. Pastor Mike and Kevin Walters managed to get us on line with a camera on a tripod and Facebook. Items such as the large cross and flowers were moved into a small vignette for background. Later, with a grant from the Central Texas Conference a better camera was purchased and the on-line presentation improved. At one time we did lose our Facebook account but did not miss a Sunday before a replacement was found. Currently, even though we are back in person we continue to stream our worship service to reach persons, who for many reasons, worship with us, not only on Sunday mornings but at the time most convenient for them. Other opportunities were presented to connect to members and others through a drive-by Ash Wednesday Service and a drive-in Christmas Eve service.

### **Personal Memories of Pastor Mike and Susan**

Susan and I have many wonderful memories of our time at Epworth. We want to highlight a few.

Our first Sunday we saw the hospitality and compassion of Epworth. A great lunch was served and we got to meet so very many. But perhaps the best part was going to the small group visits and getting to know everyone individually. Not to mention, we got very lost trying to get to David and Lana's house. All I can say is that they got to know that day how inept their Pastor is with GPS. If you give the wrong address, you will get the wrong address.

The mission trips with our youths and adults were awesome. We were delighted to see how Epworth supported these trips. From the Cake Auctions to the hard work, from the send-offs to the Sunday celebrations after we got home, these mission trips were a church-wide effort.

The compassion and caring we received when people in our family died was overwhelming. We were supported, and we knew it. I remember Beverly Carpenter asking me (we were in a small group Lent study) if we could go into the sanctuary and pray for my sister (her husband of 25 years had just unexpectedly died). When my Dad and Susan's Mom died, Epworth was with us. And there is more.

Finally, our send-off was amazing. Susan said from the get-go that she is not the typical...and you loved on her...and that means so much to me (Pastor Mike).

Thank you!!!

Mike and Susan

### **Looking Forward**

I was appointed to Epworth on July 1, 2022, and instantly felt at home! My family (husband Matt, and sons Joe and Sam) was welcomed warmly from the moment we entered. We were honored by a cookie reception and we were all so thankful for a week's worth of wonderful meals in mid-August, as we moved into the parsonage. Matt has returned to the place he is called to in the church – teaching children's Sunday School – and the boys are finding their way in youth group and helping with the AV tech every now and again.

These first few months of serving at Epworth have been filled with getting to know members, and continuing the restarting of classes. Coming out of COVID has been difficult for churches universally, and Epworth has not been immune from those struggles. But we are approaching the challenges as opportunities to assess where we are, and where we'd like to be. This congregation has a strong history of work in the community, and so we're exploring different ways of connecting and working with, and for, those around us who are in need. We believe that God has placed Epworth in this place and in this time for a reason! And we are so thankful for our continued call to continue to make disciples for Christ.

Brandie Spletzer