

History of The Fount Church

Formerly known as Fountain Valley United Methodist Church (FVUMC),
formerly known as the First United Methodist Church of Fountain Valley (FUMCFV),
or the First Methodist Church of Fountain Valley (FMCfV)
or the “Little Tan Church on Bushard”(LTCB)*

By Dennis Olson, Charter Member

The city of Fountain Valley was incorporated in 1957. Before that time it was known as Talbert and also known as “Gospel Swamp”. In the early 1960’s the landscape of “Gospel Swamp” was changing from bean fields, truck crops and orange groves to tract after tract of houses – a bedroom community for those who could commute to work in the Los Angeles area.

On July 1, 1964, Rev. Lewis Currie was appointed by the Southern California Arizona Annual Conference of the Methodist Church to start a new church in the city of Fountain Valley. Rev. Currie began knocking on doors to recruit members. Many of the contacts he made were based upon information supplied by the Methodist church that tracked when people moved from a Methodist church to another location. After Rev. Curry contacted a good-sized group he gathered them together and began meeting in the Fountain Valley elementary school on Bushard Street on September 13, 1964.

There were a number of the people that Rev. Currie had contacted who were very interested in music so a choir was formed and sang at the very first service. Bob West, also a charter member, used his pick-up truck to transport the Hammond Spinet organ owned by Dennis and Karen Olson for use at the first worship service. Bob continued to do this faithfully each Sunday until buildings were erected on the current site on Bushard where the first worship service was held November 5, 1966. The Lyddon family also loaned a spinet organ to the church for Sunday worship.

The Methodist Church was booming in California in the early 60’s so when the original members chose a name, they settled on First United Methodist Church of Fountain Valley. The thinking was that as Fountain Valley grew it was likely that there would be more than one Methodist Church in the city and the name should reflect that this church was “the first”, not the “the second” or “the third” Methodist Church in Fountain Valley. The founding members officially joined the Methodist Church on November 22, 1964 – many by transfer of membership from Methodist Churches where they had been members. The First Methodist Church of Fountain Valley was officially incorporated on July 20, 1965.

The founding group with the aid of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference managed to purchase five acres a short distance from the Fountain Valley Elementary school and built the first two buildings a sanctuary and Sunday school classrooms. (later converted to a lounge and church offices). Culver Heaton was the architect. Several years later the original 5-acre lot was reduced to about 3 acres by selling the South and West sides for street access and houses. A single-story house to be used as the church parsonage was also purchased nearby the church campus. It is still the parsonage but was remodeled in the 90’s when a second-story addition was made.

The first services in the new buildings were held November 6, 1966. The education building was also used as a fellowship hall. An innovative feature of its design was that the wooden panel partitions between rooms could be taken down and the partitions used as tables, which was commonly done when church bazaars and mother-daughter banquets were held. Bill and Claire Drozda were also hired in 1966. Claire was the church office secretary and Bill was chancel choir. They continued in those positions until 1980.

Consecration Sunday for the new facilities was January 22, 1967. The first sunrise Easter service was held that same year on a large earth mound with wooden cross and benches located about the middle of present south parking lot location. Also in 1967, the preschool with Elaine Erickson as director was formed with three teachers and 36 students.

On April 23, 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church and became known as The United Methodist Church and subsequently the First Methodist Church of Fountain Valley (FUMCFV) became the First United Methodist Church of Fountain Valley (FUMCFV).

On July 1, 1968, Rev. Ken McMillan was appointed senior pastor of FUMCFV. Shortly after his appointment, on October 2, 1968 the Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) was chartered at FUMCFV. The WSCS later became United Methodist Women (UMW). In 1970, an old 1890's Estey pipe organ was donated by Spurgeon United Methodist Church of Santa Ana. The organ was stored in "Red" Moore's" garage for a long time before installation in the church sanctuary (now the East Chapel). The organ was not electric and had a mechanical interface to the pipes. It became quite a challenge to maintain the organ. Much of the maintenance was performed by Bill Drozda. Some thought he used bubble gum and tin foil to keep it going. The organ was also particularly susceptible to wet weather-probably due to a leaky roof. One Christmas morning was very trying for organist Ann Olmstead because only one rank of pipes was totally working.

Occasionally Dennis Olson would be a substitute organist for Ann Olmstead. One Sunday morning when Dennis was playing, a world's record may have been set for the fastest singing of the hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" during a worship service. Dottie McCall was the choir director at the time. As Dennis was completing playing the first verse of the hymn, Dottie thought the tempo should be a little slower and gave a hand gesture to Dennis to slow down. Dennis however thought the hand gesture was requesting to speed up the tempo so he did. Dottie continued to make her hand gestures more frantically and Dennis speeded up even more. With the feedback loop obviously out of control, the choir and congregation were out of breath at the conclusion of the hymn. From then on Dennis and Dottie got their hand signals coordinated much to the relief of the choir and congregation.

Rev. Ford Miller was appointed Senior Pastor on July 1, 1971. Rev. Miller was known for his ability to raise funds and build new church facilities. He had recently been instrumental in building new church facilities at La Palma UMC. Not long after he came to FUMCFV a building fund was established to construct a Sanctuary/Fellowship Hall and a second education building. On Palm Sunday 1975, the first Sunday service was held in the new sanctuary, which is the current sanctuary. On July 1, 1976 - ground breaking was begun for a new educational wing addition to the West end of the second Education Building. The addition was completed on August 16, 1977. The old sanctuary was converted into a lounge conference room and church offices. Rev. Ford Miller's wife Carol had a passion for music and loved directing the Cherub Choir and being in the Chancel Choir that Bill Drozda directed.

Rev. Dr. Carroll Word was appointed Senior Pastor on July 1, 1979. During his tenure there was a lot of diversity because the Nozomi (Japanese), Jewish B'nai Tzedek, Calvary Apostolic and Korean Presbyterian congregations were meeting and worshipping on the campus. Bill and Pearl Vincent spearheaded a great outreach of the church at the time as the congregation supported Vietnamese refugees including Thong Vang and 6 children. Shirley Clemans was hired as preschool director in 1973.

Rev. Jim Hadley was appointed senior pastor on July 1, 1983. While his predecessor Dr. Word was at FUMCFV some theological issues developed that resulted in a split in the congregation and a number of the congregation leaving. Rev. Hadley had a great passion to

care for the ill and was just what was needed to help heal a congregation. His wife Polly brought great leadership to the Sunday School program. Rev. Hadley was skilled in black and white photography sort of an "Ansel" Hadley. With the loss of membership, the church was in some financial difficulties but the congregation wanted to get a new organ. An organ committee was formed to determine what organ to purchase and to raise funds for the purchase. On November 30, 1986 a new Allen Digital organ was dedicated by Bishop Jack Tuell. The organists at that time were Irene Gregg and Betty Virgo. Another outreach program at that time was supporting a Kenya water project led by Rev. Hadley's son-in-law, also a United Methodist pastor.

Rev. John McFarland was appointed senior pastor on July 1, 1988 and remained in that position for 26 years. Early in John's ministry, a set of handbells was dedicated in memory of Frank Gregg in 1988 and a handbell choir was formed shortly thereafter. Bill Castle was added to the staff and was handbell director for many years. In October, following Pastor John's appointment an all church planning conference was held. It was at that time the church adopted "A Bible Teaching Church for All Ages" as the vision statement that is still part of the church's DNA today. Some key staff additions were made in the early part of Pastor John's tenure. Klea Walin became secretary in October of 1989 and remained secretary for 15 years. Lela Satterfield became Director of Music in 1991, Shelly Peters (nee Scholten) organist in 1992, and Richard Heyduck as Youth Pastor in 1992. When Rev. Richard Heyduck moved on in 1994, Tim Peters was hired to fill the Youth Pastor position. That same year, Pastor John began working on his doctorate and in 1999 received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena.

In 1992 Pastor John's wife Kathleen saw the need for adult & children's education beyond Sunday morning. The church implemented her vision for Academy Classes. Many of these classes were held early Sunday evenings with several classes taught simultaneously. Each class was a small group averaging about 10 people per class. Academy classes were for about 10 weeks and held in the fall and early spring each year. Pastors and laypersons taught a wide variety of subjects. Subjects included finance, Bible 101, Prayer 101, "Experiencing God", etc. Each class provided their own refreshments. Childcare was provided for children but many times the children were learning their roles and music as part of the many musicals that were produced under the leadership of Lela Satterfield and the assistance of keyboard specialist, Shelly Peters. Lela wrote some of the productions and adapted a number of musicals for FUMCFV use. Some of the productions included: 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way Through the Bible', "The Best Christmas Ever", "Santa's Last Christmas", "Merry Christmas Scrooge", "Country Mouse Christmas", "Joseph From the Pit to the Palace" and "Pilgrim's Progress".

The United Methodist Men (UMM) also got a big boost after Pastor John came to Fountain Valley. Willie Smith, a long term Methodist, can be thanked for keeping the UMM active, but a big boost really came when Pastor John pushed to have a men's weekend mountain retreat for about a dozen men led by Will Wyatt, a good friend of Pastor John and his wife Kathleen. The theme of the retreat was based on Romans 12:1-2^{NASB} that includes "*... to present your bodies, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*". Ever since that beginning the UMM have held annual retreats that renew the spirits of the men and dedication of themselves to God's work. The men's retreats were designed to enhance discipleship and many men accepted Christ during the weekend retreats.

In 1995, the mortgage was paid in full and a symbolic "mortgage-burning" celebration was held. With a good financial condition and growth in the congregation, it was a good time to expand the campus facilities. In 1997 additions were made to all four corners of the sanctuary (present sanctuary). These included showers, bathroom upgrades (a crying/bride room), a prayer closet, and storage room. This was a great help for the S.H.I.P. (Self Help Interfaith

Program) outreach since volunteers no longer had to take the guests elsewhere to shower. In 1999 the Welcome Home Ministry, an idea of Debra Davis, began and continues today. About 60-70 Welcome Home guests attend every Saturday to be fed breakfast as well as God's Word. The guests take advantage of the showers and other service such washing/drying clothes, free haircuts and free donated clothes. The church continued to grow and there was a need for a new two-story Administration and classroom wing that was added in 1999. The building could have been completed without an elevator, but the building committee at that time felt that it was needed to make the upper story easily accessible for people with disabilities. It was a costly decision but the committee knew it was the right one. The original sanctuary building that contained the office as well became a place for the youth after the office was moved to the new administration/classroom building.

The Hispanic Assembly under the leadership of their Pastor Ernesto Ramirez began meeting on campus in 1999. The ministry was embraced by the FUMCV Council of Servant Leaders and by the Administrative Board.

After 24 years as Preschool Director, Shirley Clemans retired in 2003 and Donna McInteer became director. On Easter Sunday that same year, a new service was launched called the "*The Connection*". It was targeted for people under 30 years old and included music from a praise band. Geoff Wilson who grew up in the church led *the Connection* while completing his Master of Divinity degree at Talbot School of Theology. Pastor Dan Nehrbass was hired as Administrative Pastor in February of 2005. Pastor Dan and his twin brother Ken Nehrbass also grew up at FUMCFV. They came to the church because on their 10th birthday, their parents asked them what they wanted for their birthday and they said they wanted to go to church. After Pastor Geoff left to join the staff of the Calvary Refuge Church in Huntington Beach, Pastor Dan led *The Connection* service. Some people say the target age of the *Connection* was revised when Pastor Dan reached 30.

Ken Nerhbass married Mendy Stone also a member of the church. Ken became a pastor and Mendy became a nurse and also toured the country playing the cello for an evangelistic praise music group known as the *Celebrant Singers*. Pastor Ken and Mendy were called to the missionary field as part of the Wycliffe Bible Translators organization. They served for a number of years in Vanuatu. While there, Pastor Ken translated the New Testament into the local language and now New Testament Bibles are available to Vanuatu residents. They and their family have since returned to the United States where Pastor Ken is teaching at Biola University.

Julie Green is a missionary for the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Julie is the daughter of Bob and Carol Green who were early members of the church. Julie spent most of her time as a missionary in Thailand. Julie is currently residing in Huntington Beach, but expects to be back in the active mission field soon.

In 2005 an all church planning day was held to revisit the vision of the church. This was the beginning of the "Going and Growing Disciple – Makers" vision for the church. This was aimed at not only learning the Bible, but to go one step further by also raising up Disciples who in turn would make other disciples. Additional emphasis was put on outreach i.e. going and doing something more than just learning about the Bible that was emphasized by "A Bible Teaching Church for All Ages". Dr. Eveline Eng was hired as Director of Music Ministry in December of 2005. Shortly thereafter in 2006, Charlotte Hsieh joined the staff as Keyboard/Collaborative/Artist to meet organ, piano and keyboard music. After Eveline left, Charlotte also assumed the duties of choir director.

A gazebo with memorial benches was added in the patio area between the East Chapel, and the sanctuary. A baptismal fount was added to the South patio area between the Multi-

Purpose room and the Sanctuary. Many baptisms have been performed there including one time when a man was immersed with his shoes on. The main kitchen located on the north side of the sanctuary building was remodeled with new granite countertops and cabinets.

In 2009, Pastor John was appointed Senior Pastor to a two point charge of consisting of FVUMC and First United Methodist Church of Huntington Beach (FUMCHB). [Note: Over the years the name of First United Methodist Church of Fountain Valley (FUMCV) was generally shortened to Fountain Valley United Methodist Church (FVUMC) the name the church is currently known by. Dropping of the word First from the name was not important because it is the only UMC in Fountain Valley.] Later, FUMCHB changed their name to Surf City UMC. Also in 2009, the choirs of both churches merged in order to have a larger choir and sing at both churches. Pastor Don Boger who was already employed at FUMCHB was hired as Worship Pastor at FVUMC and served both churches. Later Don Boger's brother, Pastor Anthony Boger, was added to the FVUMC staff as associate pastor.

After 8 years of service Donna McInteer retired as preschool director in 2011. Coleen Kaae was then hired and remains as Preschool Director. The preschool currently has a staff of 7 and an enrollment nearing 60 students.

Near the end of 2013, a Spanish Ministry under the leadership of Pastor Al Ramirez asked FVUMC if they could temporarily meet on our campus. They were welcomed by FVUMC and the temporary relationship blossomed in 2014 and has been a very positive experience. This Spanish Ministry is now called La Cima and continues to be led by Pastor Al. La Cima and FVUMC occasionally have combined worship services but generally Sunday worship services are separate. Children's Sunday School for FVUMC and La Cima have been successfully combined, resulting in strengthening each other's worship and ministry.

On July 1, 2014 a new era was begun at FVUMC. God called Pastor Glen Haworth to be the Lead Pastor while Pastor John McFarland who had served as senior pastor FVUMC for 26 years was appointed to Orangethorpe UMC in Fullerton. Simultaneously with the appointments, the two-point charge of FVUMC and Surf City UMC was dissolved. The chancel choir under the leadership of Pastor Don Boger still rehearse together and sing one Sunday at Surf City and one Sunday at FV each month. Early after Pastor Glen was appointed, Pat Stoaks was hired as Administrative Assistant. Recently Ric Seaver has been added to the church staff to lead Family/Children's ministry and Ted McFarland was hired to lead Youth Ministry. Pastor Anthony Boger continues to stay in relationship with the church, especially with the Welcome Home ministry, but he was appointed by the UMC Cal-Pac Conference to a ¾ time position as Senior Pastor at Surf City UMC. Under the leadership of Pastor Glen, the Church Council has gone through a re-visioning process including an off campus retreat to listen to God and shape a new vision for FVUMC. Through prayer and discernment, a new vision statement emerged from this process. The church leadership envisioned that we are "A Biblical Family of Joyful Servants, Sharing the Love of God in a Broken World."

One of the results of that visioning was the decision to change the name of the church to The Fount. Conjuring images of the "Fount of Every Blessing" (i.e. Jesus), the church continues to move forward proclaiming the Gospel and inviting people to come to faith in Jesus the Fount. So while the church maintains its relationship with The United Methodist Church worldwide, it finds its local mission to reach those for whom the church has become a foreign land, a welcoming place where all God's children find the refreshing, deep living waters of Jesus Christ Himself!

Early in 2016, The Fount hired Jonathan Kupper to be its new Director of Music Ministries and Choir Director. Jonathan has brought back an adult choir ministry and is working

to renew and expand music ministries of all kinds. Ted McFarland, and his new wife, Katrina, have moved to Kansas to being their lives together.

The “Gospel Swamp” area has been richly blessed indeed by The Fount Church. This church that started 52 years ago has carried the Word to the ends of the earth and impacted many thousands of people by the relationships of all those believers who attended here. One can only imagine what God has in store for the next 50+ years.

* Bill Drozda and his mother Esther composed a song titled "The Little Tan Church on Bushard" for one of the early skits at the church. The lyrics for the song shown below were sung to the tune of "The Church in the Wildwood" written by Dr. William S. Pitts in 1857.

The Little Tan Church on Bushard

Verse 1:

The church in Fountain Valley that is Methodist,
a greater bunch of people can't be found.
We come and get together to worship
and a good, good spirit is around.

Verse 2:

We have old-timers here in Fountain Valley
and of course we have new-timers too.
Today we celebrate our fellowship
as we gather together me and you.

Chorus:

Oh come, come, come, come,
come to the church in the valley.
Oh come to the church on Bushard,
We all work together for God's purpose
and it's better than working in the yard.

Final Note: This history document is meant to be a living document. Please submit any suggested changes, anecdotes and additions to the author or to The Fount church office for incorporation into the next edition.