

# A Brief History of Monkton United Methodist Church

Founded 1870

## ***Introduction***

Monkton United Methodist Church has a long and rich heritage and our roots go deep in the history of the North County. Since our founding in 1870, we have been an active community of faith and an integral part of the Monkton community, sharing our friendship and faith with others. Our hearts, our minds and our doors have always been open. This brief history describes how Monkton UMC began and the activities and principals that have guided us through the past 150 years.

## ***The Beginning***

1870 – 2020. One hundred fifty years! What was the world like in the early years of Monkton UMC? No electricity and no telephones, no radio and no television, and certainly no internet. When we broke ground for the church, the Civil War was only five years behind us, and reminders of the war were all around. Ulysses S. Grant was in the White House. Jefferson Davis' children were in school in Harford County. 1870 saw the third official observance of Memorial Day.

In Monkton, you had to be very young not to remember the 1861 antiwar riots in Baltimore that led to a 5-year military occupation by Federal troops. Southern sympathizers destroyed the railroad trestle north of Cockeysville to disrupt north-south rail traffic. It was said that from the roof of the Clynmalira Manor house, you could see the red reflection in the sky when Richmond was burning. Even the very young listened to stories of the war told by the local veterans. And, once the church was built, there were times before and after services when men almost came to blows over their views on the late war. Some must have wondered if the war was really over.

One of the reasons Monkton built its own Methodist church was the condition of the roads. The roads, dirt, of course, were often impassable, not just during flooding and snowstorms, but whenever there was a good rain. With the roads so unreliable, going to church at Hereford, Clynmalira, or one of the other churches on the local circuit depended almost entirely on the weather and the state of the roads. What the Methodists in Monkton really needed was their own church.

In July 1870, a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre plot just east of the Gunpowder River was purchased for the sum of \$175. The church was built quickly and dedicated in January 1871. High on a hill near the NCR Trail, the new church enjoyed the most prominent location in the Village of Monkton. According to an article in the *Maryland Journal*, "...the church readily attracts the eye of everyone approaching Monkton, and doubtless is the neatest and most convenient house of worship in the upper part of the county."

In 1871 the Trustees purchased a house on the corner of Monkton Road and Garfield Avenue to serve as a Parsonage. In 1935, the Church purchased the old Monkton schoolhouse adjacent to the Parsonage to serve as a Church Hall. In 1970, we built an addition to the main Church and sold the Church Hall to Isaiah Baptist Church.

## ***The Circuit-Rider Days***

The Monkton Methodist Episcopal Church started as part of the Hereford Circuit which was established in 1843 with 475 white and 125 black members. By 1894 it had 14 churches: Hereford, Mt. Carmel, Falls Road, Dover, Jessop, Bosley, Monkton, Wesley Chapel, Clynmalira, Corbett, Phoenix, Union Chapel, Warren, and Epworth. A typical circuit schedule for a single Sunday was published in an 1895 issue of the *Maryland Journal*: Rev. Thomas Wood would preach at Jessop at 11 A.M., at Clynmalira at 3 P.M., and at Warren at 7:30 P.M. Rev. E.E. Marshall would be at Hereford at 10:30 A.M., at Mt. Carmel at 3 P.M., and at Falls Road at 7:30 P.M. Sunday was a long day for the Circuit riders!

Over time, the Circuit dwindled as churches closed or became independent. In 2004 the remaining two churches, Monkton and Clynmalira, parted ways, ending what was by then the Monkton Charge. We are now a station church with our own pastor.

## ***Church Life and Activities***

From its very beginning, Monkton UMC has offered programs and activities that unite and enrich our community. In the early days, a popular activity was pic nics - not picnics - often sponsored by the church for the community at large. Most communities had their own bands, and a band was always present when a pic nic was in progress. At one memorable pic nic held behind Clynmalira Church, a Mr. Miller of Hereford set up his locally famous "flying horses" for children to ride while an organ grinder turned out tunes.

In the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, Monkton was something of a resort town. Each summer families came out from the city and stayed at The Monkton Hotel, adjacent to the Monkton railroad station, or with local families to boat on the river, play tennis, walk the surrounding lanes, follow the dirt roads on horseback, play croquet, and, of course, partake of the local abundance of food. Many of the "tourists" visited Monkton Church.

We have always been blessed with engaged and energetic people willing to give of themselves, their time, and their talents. Over the years, we have sponsored countless activities and programs for the congregation and the community. Here is a sampling:

- ◆ Worship services
- ◆ Camp meetings
- ◆ Sunday school
- ◆ Outdoor chapel services
- ◆ Food drives
- ◆ Local and international missions trips
- ◆ Bible study
- ◆ Pancake suppers
- ◆ Candymaking and sales
- ◆ Silent auctions
- ◆ Ham and oyster dinners
- ◆ Craft circle
- ◆ Youth group activities and trips
- ◆ Music concerts
- ◆ Youth and adult plays
- ◆ Church picnics
- ◆ September sales
- ◆ Vacation Bible School
- ◆ Hayrides and bonfires
- ◆ Easter egg hunts
- ◆ Christmas caroling
- ◆ Blessing of animals

For a small church, we have done many big things!

## ***Looking Ahead***

Times change. Technology changes our world and how we communicate. People's perceptions of religion change. But what has not changed in 137 years, and will not change anytime soon, is the deep need for love, faith, and fellowship in our neighborhood and throughout the world.

At Monkton UMC, we continually search for new ways to fulfill our mission, which is to know Christ and to make Him known. As such, we strive to:

- ◆ To love and serve Christ.
- ◆ To connect people to Christ and to each other.
- ◆ To celebrate the community of Christ.
- ◆ To glorify God.

As we move ahead, we will continue to serve as a beacon and a sanctuary to Monkton and the surrounding communities.