RECENT HISTORY OF UNITED, 2002 - 2012
Written by Susan Bergmann

As Rev. Aldridge wrote in our 50th Anniversary celebration history, “My experience is that very few churches have an adequate written history due to the fact that while events are happening no one thinks it is important to record them because everyone knows the facts.  But there comes a time when the older generation is gone and records of great value are gone with them.”  It is with this in mind that I have compiled the history of our move to Washington Avenue.  The history of our church from 2002 -2013 is certainly one of the most momentous times of our history.  It took our congregation twenty years of soul searching and discussion to decide to leave our beloved church on Main Street.  As difficult as this decision was, we were not prepared for what was to follow.

We were proud to leave our church in Mukwonago as a united congregation, but as the process of finding land and planning our new building dragged on, our congregation struggled to reach a consensus on a building plan.  It is not unusual for congregations to lose members in times of great transitions, and we found we were not immune to this either.  We not only lost members because of the building plan, but also to moves brought on by the recession, and the deaths of three of our beloved members.  By the time we moved to Waukesha, we were down to 41 members.  We had not only come up with two building plans, and realized that if we built on the Miramar Road property the building would be too small, but had also considered an existing building on the edge of Waukesha.

Our congregation did some things well, but we made mistakes.  A list of laments include:

* Selling the church before we had land, and before we had a plan that the congregation approved.  In hindsight, the vote to sell was the easy one.  It is easy to dream about building an energy efficient church, but as they say the devil is in the details.  Once the congregation voted to sell, we soon discovered that many members had very strong feelings about what the building should be like, and that they were not willing to give money to something they did not support.  It was hard to believe that our congregation that was once united about selling our original building could so easily fall apart over the details of a new building.
* Once we sold the church we could not find a place to hold 10:30 services.  This, along with the building process affected our membership numbers.
* Buying land when the market was at its peak.
* Buying the Miramar property (in East Troy) with the assumption we would grow if we built.  Later on, when we were able to project growth, we found out there was not as much potential for increasing our membership as we had thought if we built on Miramar Road.
* Hiring an architect that we could not afford.  It cost us $34,144.25 for the architect and building estimates that the congregation rejected.
* Not sticking to a realistic building budget.
* Not letting the congregation consider the Saylesville option (the building on the edge of Waukesha) as soon as it came up.  This created a great deal of tension and anxiety among the members.  If we had taken a straw poll on what the congregation wanted to do, members who were excited by this option would have felt listened to, and their views validated.
* Not having the building committee agree on a plan to present to the congregation.
* Holding way too many congregational meetings about plan G (from the original architects), with no definite date for a congregational vote.  This resulted in the congregation having to present a petition to the board to force a vote.
* Having to list the land on Miramar Road for half the price we paid for it.
* Losing friends and members.

On a more positive note:

* We sold church when the market was at its peak.
* We learned from our mistakes with Kubala, our original architect, and kept the congregation informed and engaged with the second building plan.
* Even though we had a building plan we were willing to change directions when Washington Avenue came on the market.  We learned a lesson from our Saylesville experience, and moved quickly to get the congregation in to see the building, and discuss the options.
* To make sure we didn’t lose the building the board approved making an offer on Washington Avenue contingent on congregational approval.  It meant we could pull out of the deal if the congregation did not approve.  We also kept everyone informed at all stages of the process.
* We saved money by negotiating with several banks for mortgage rates, and by getting multiple bids for everything we did during the move.
* We completed our fundraising pledge drive in less than two weeks.
* We moved into an existing building, where there is no need to make decisions about details like where the doors and windows will be.
* We changed our name before we moved.
* We faced our challenges and we are stronger for it.

When we left East Troy (where we were renting) our congregation was down to 50 members.  We lost 8 more with the move to Waukesha.  Fortunately this story has a happy ending.  We love our new home.  Without the challenges we faced in the 5 years after selling the church in Mukwonago, our congregation would most likely never have considered the move to Waukesha. These experiences made us more realistic about what we could afford, and very thankful that we made the move.