

VILLAGE CHAPEL'S 75th ANNIVERSARY!
1950 - 2025

At the beginning of its Anniversary Year, **2025**, the church statistical report indicated the total active members as 171. Of this number, 104 were women and 67 were men. One hundred percent were listed as white. The age ranges listed were:

17 and under	1	.01%
18 – 25	5	.03%
26 – 40	42	.25%
41 – 55	12	.07%
56 – 70	47	.27%
Over 70	<u>64</u>	<u>.37%</u>
	171	100%

The year **2025** brought a number of happy and unhappy occurrences.

On Sunday, **February 2nd** at 3:00 p.m. a memorial service was held for Nancy Beane Wallace, mother of Amy Wallace Parker and a member of the Church. Nancy was a wonderful musician and piano player, often playing duets with Sharon Curnutte, which in recent times even included videos of her playing from her home.

On a happy note, the Church, under the leadership of Barbara Tabaretti, Kathy Kruk, Debbie Sockman, and Vicki Cunningham held a bridal shower and brunch in honor of Ellan Ann Sockman as she looks to her marriage in the spring of 2025.

As an outcome of the Thriving Congregations project, a Men's Dinner Group was organized by Roger Sockman. This group involves men of the Church coming together once a month to go out to local restaurants for food and fellowship. This activity has gradually increased in attendance, and the group enjoys sampling a variety of Charleston restaurants.

The children's Thriving Congregation initiative with Chamberlain Elementary School continues to "thrive" with the congregation providing backpacks in the fall and attending birthday luncheons and a variety of activities for the children.

On Sunday, **March 2nd**, the Church celebrated Jule Sockman's 102nd birthday with bagpipes as part of the service and a special reception after the worship service in the Jule Sockman Fellowship Hall.

In early **March**, Common Grounds, which had been located near the former location of K-Mart in upper Kanawha City closed that location and moved to the house next door! It is open on Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This location will certainly be more convenient for Village Chapel volunteers. To facilitate transport in and out of the

facility, a ramp was constructed shortly after Common Grounds moved into their new location adjacent Village Chapel.

Prior to the actual celebration of the 75th Anniversary on **March 23rd**, the Church engaged in a number of activities related to the event as planned and organized by the 75th Anniversary Planning Team. This team included: Shannon Bland, Sandy Bowles, Jane Harich, Pat Jacobs, Kathy Kruk, Harriett Nottingham, Patti Salisbury, Rita Sockman, Roger Sockman, Sarah Stebbins, and Todd Wright.

Under the direction of Shannon Bland, youth volunteers from local schools and the Church distributed plastic bags beautifully labeled with Village Chapel and information about pick-up to homes throughout the Kanawha City area on Saturday, **March 8th** and these were then picked up on **March 15th** with a very successful gathering of food for Common Grounds.

In the weeks prior to the anniversary celebration, the pictures of the six ministers serving Village Chapel over its 75 years were moved from the Education Building classroom where they were previously hung to the Fellowship Hall, adding our current minister, Todd Wright, to the collection.

Throughout the past year, Rita Sockman, wife of Roger and daughter-in-law of Jule Sockman, gathered pictures from a variety of sources and created about ten scrapbooks which for the Anniversary and following weeks, were displayed in the alcove of the Fellowship Hall for guests and members to review. She worked with children of charter members and long-time members to identify many of the individuals portrayed in the pictures.

The creation of this history or “Snippets” from the histories, Session minutes, Presbyterian Women minutes, The Villager, documents available in many files, “word of mouth” and many other sources was created over many months by Sandy Bowles, a member of the Church since 1985 – one of those “labors of love”!!

In **January** a communication addressed to “Members and Friends” was distributed inviting them to “Save the Date! (March 23rd) to come and celebrate the anniversary of the Church’s founding! It provided information about the services leading up to the March date, information about parking and the dinner which was a wonderful addition to the celebration.

In **March**, the Charleston City Council issued a proclamation with Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin present along with Council members and representatives of Village Chapel. The Proclamation recognized Village Chapel’s contributions as a Church and its service to the Charleston community.

THE CELEBRATION

On **March 26, 1950** Village Chapel Presbyterian Church was officially organized with 239 members – the largest charter membership of any church in the Southern Presbyterian Church! As a Church, we have several “older siblings” as Village was the ninth church to be built in the Kanawha Valley by First Presbyterian Church, four of them by Dr. J. Moody McNair who also served as the first pastor of Village Chapel.

Now, in **2025**, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Village Chapel, we are recognizing the Church and its history over these 75 years. The celebration has been planned to extend over a period of ten weeks beginning with **January 19th** and concluding with the actual celebration of the birth of the church on **March 23rd**. The services prior to the “birth date” will follow the pattern of the services with each decade beginning with the 1950s. The bulletins for each of the services will use the same format and order of worship of each of the decades. Also, for each service, a different communion set will be used. For example, for the first service representing the 1950s, the communion ware decorated with a grape pattern on the pitcher and goblet, was used. The communion ware was donated by Kathryn McCrary who began her work at Village Chapel in 1953. For each of the services, on alternate weeks, five individuals who have had a significant connection to Village Chapel were invited to come back to participate in a worship service. A bit about each of the services, the individuals participating and how Village Chapel has influenced their life follows.

Denny Dodson **January 19, 2025**

The first guest preacher to participate in the Anniversary Celebration was the Reverend Denny Dodson. Denny is the son of Elmer and Polly Dodson, charter members in 1950. He is also the first child to be baptized in the Church. Denny grew up here at Village Chapel and went on to be ordained as a minister of the word and sacrament. He currently serves the Belle Presbyterian Church. Within Denny’s sermon, he made reference to his growing up in the Church and how his experiences here impacted his life and his choice to go on to become a minister. At the end of the service, he provided the following benediction in song:

May blessings be upon you Village Chapel,
As you celebrate the years you’ve had.
You’ve done so very much with all the lives you’ve touched
Through times of joy and those times that were a little sad.
You started out with only a few good members,
But with fate you managed to be strong,
You built community your faith was plain to see
God’s work through you has lasted oh so long.
The children that you raised were good seeds planted,

You watched them grow; you nurtured them along the way,
You helped them understand for them God has a plan
They too will be the church in their own day.
It has been a good day to be with you,
I feel God's spirit in this saintly room
The memories run deep to mingle with the sheep
That God has called to make his flowers bloom.
And as you go today away from this place,
Share the word of God with all you see,
Put a smile upon your face,
Share God's love and grace,
Be at peace with God through all eternity.
May blessings be upon you, Village Chapel
Go in peace.

As an addition, this service also included the ordination of elders for the Class of 2027 which includes Heather Barry, Matt Chambers, Bob Pogue, and Vicki Frisk. Vicki was unable to attend and will be installed at a later date. Kelsey Rorrer will continue another year as the Youth elder on the Session.

Nelle Dodson Howard
February 2, 2015

The second guest presenter, two weeks later on **February 2nd** and representing the decade of the 1970s, was Nellie Dodson Howard. Nelle was also the daughter of Elmer and Polly Dodson, and the sister of Rev. Denny Dodson who represented the 1950s. The communion set on this day was a simple white set with a golden cross on the pitcher and goblet. The title of Nelle's sermon was "I Think I Love You" and the theme of Love permeated the Call to Worship, the Prayer of Confession and the Scripture Lesson which was First Corinthians 13: 1-13 which speaks of love . . . "all their spiritual gifts are as nothing unless they have love, which is the greatest gift of all." The hymns for Nelle's service were "God of the Ages" and "For the Beauty of the Earth". This service also included the Sacrament of Communion.

Daniel "Dan" Bowles
February 16, 2025

Our third guest speaker was Dan Bowles, son of John and Sandy Bowles representing the decade of the 1990s. The amethyst communion set used in this service was a gift to the Church in 1997 in memory of Michael David Bowles by his parents. Dan used Luke 5:1-11 which speaks of Jesus instructing his disciples to "fish for people" and the title of his sermon was "Have You Been Caught"? Dan spoke of "Being Caught" by Village Chapel, his

Presbyterian church in Oak Ridge, North Carolina and for the last seven years, by a group of men active in F3 Nation, a group which empowers men through the principles of Fitness, Fellowship and Faith while also promoting a belief in something bigger than oneself. Dan spoke of how Village Chapel influenced him as he participated in Youth Fellowship, particularly activities he engaged in during his junior and senior high years including Youth Sunday and his doing the sermon as a senior. Dan also spoke of his other involvements including his marriage to his wife, Leslie; the baptism of their first daughter, Macy; his drawings of bulletin covers; and his doing the Eulogy for his father. The hymns, “Earth and All Stars” and “Here I Am, Lord” spoke to his faith.

The bulletin in the 1990s included a “statement of purpose” which was adopted by the Session in 1995 and was prominently displayed on the cover:

Village Chapel is a congregation of God’s people. We know God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are called to do God’s work in the world.

Our mission is to accomplish God’s work through evangelism, service and prophetic witness (God’s message to society). To equip ourselves for this mission: We worship God. We study God’s Word. We minister to one another.

Kari Preslar
February 23, 2025

Kari Preslar served as the Director of Christian Education for Village Chapel (??) in the mid-1990s. She was the guest presenter on Sunday, **February 23rd** representing the decade of the 2000s. The Affirmation of Faith was from The Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Question 80:

What do you mean when you speak of “the forgiveness of sins”?

That because of Jesus Christ, God no longer holds my sins against me. Christ alone is my righteousness and my life. Grace alone, not my merits, is the basis on which God has forgiven me in him. Faith alone, not my works, is the means by which I receive me in him. Faith alone, not my works, is the means by which I receive Christ into my heart, and with him the forgiveness that makes me whole.

Frank Mansell, III
March 23, 2025

The Service of Celebration of Village Chapel’s 75th Anniversary took place on **March 23rd, 2025**. The service began with a ringing of chimes followed by a procession of the acolytes, Paul and Addison Markham, the ministers, and the choir. The service was

proceeded by the dedication of a new cross. This cross was created out of raw steel and copper recycled from the original church steeple that had to be removed in 2024 due to leakage around the steeple. The new cross was created by metalworkers, Matt and Tessie Wallace, and gifted to the church by Charlie and Sarah Stebbins. Following the dedication and welcome to special guests, special presentations of hand drawn pictures of the church were made to Todd Wright (15 years), Amy Parker (23 years) and Sharon Curnutte (50 years).

The service continued with the call to worship and singing of the hymn, “Come Sing, O Church, in Joy”, followed by the prayer of confession, assurance of pardon, and sharing of the peace. Special music by the choir was the singing of “Speak, O Lord” which was followed by the Time with Children.

The guest minister for the service was the Reverend Frank Mansell, III, the son of our previous pastor, Frank Mansell, Jr. and his wife, Joan. Frank is the pastor at Western Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Frank’s sermon was titled, “Remember and Go” and he shared with the congregation that at age 53, nearly 80 percent of his life has been connected to Village Chapel. Since coming here at age 11, he indicated that the Church here has made an “indelible mark” on his life. He described himself, as a youngster, as a “church orphan” with his mother singing in the choir and his father the minister. It was clear that he feels a very strong connection to “this church, these people, and this place!” He also stressed the importance of not only celebrating the past, but looking forward to the future, to discover what God is calling us to do. “God is with you always in Jesus Christ, so now go tell others of that good news.” Communion was served using the original silver communion set.

Following the service, Janet Rorrer took a group picture of the seated congregation, just as those taken in past anniversaries. A luncheon was served by Café Appalachia and following this, Dr. Wright shared communications from various groups. Maureen Wright brought greetings from the Presbytery of West Virginia.

All in all, it was a wonderful ten-week celebration of 75 years of Village Chapel Presbyterian Church, and the Church can now look forward to its next anniversary – its Centennial!!

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND CONCERNS

In looking to the celebration of Village Chapel’s 75th Anniversary and the conclusion of this history, the author, in looking back over this document, notes some of the concerns or issues that have occurred over these seventy-five years and the notable strengths of Village Chapel.