

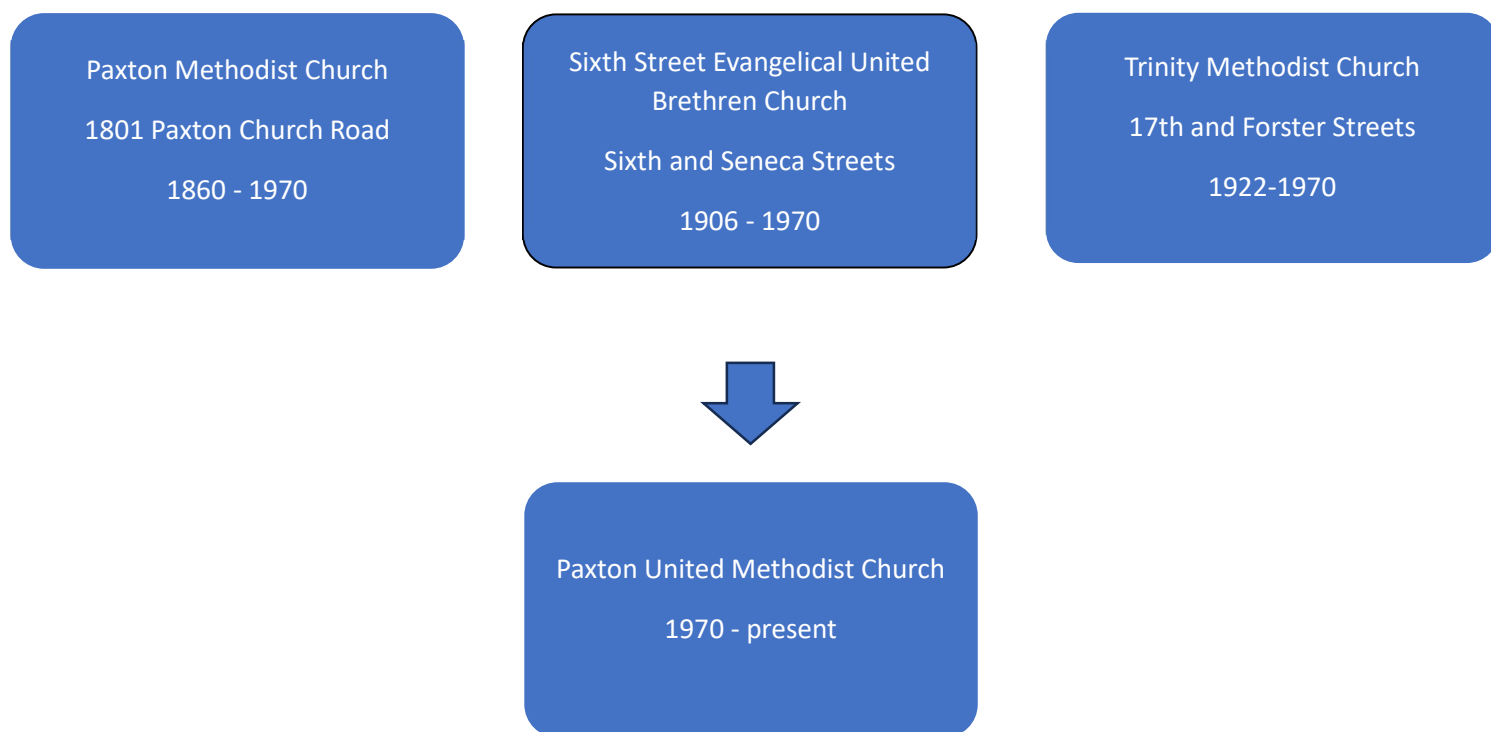
Paxton United Methodist Church



50th Anniversary
2024

What is Paxton United Methodist Church?

The Beginnings: In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Churches decided to unite to become the United Methodist Church. This change brought into focus social, economic, and geographic reasons that several congregations might benefit from joining together. Discussion, prayer, and planning led to the union of Sixth Street, Trinity, and Paxton Church congregations. On April 17, 1970, seventeen members from the three churches attended a meeting at the home of District Superintendent, Dr. Martin Hopkins, for the purpose of nominating members from all three former churches to staff the new church. A charge conference was held on June 24, 1970, to discuss the logistics of the union and the leadership of this new church. On July 1, 1970 Paxton United Methodist Church was formed.



A new building was proposed, and a new location was chosen. On March 17th 1974, the new building was dedicated at its current location at 3550 North Progress Avenue in Harrisburg Pennsylvania. That same year, on May 12th 1974, the first church service was held.



Paxton United Methodist Church

3550 North Progress Avenue, Harrisburg PA 17110

Timeline for Paxton UMC Beginnings

July 1970	Three churches merged
1971-1973	Built new church building
March 17, 1974	Church building dedication
May 12, 1974	First worship service in this building
Nov 1990	Mortgage retired

Recent Events: As we approached our 50th year in the Progress Avenue building, two major world-wide events influenced the shaping of Paxton United Methodist Church.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a full shut-down of face-to-face gatherings in March 2020. Paxton pivoted to online worship experiences and zoom meetings with the rest of the world, and did not resume worship services in the building until February 27/28, 2021, with distancing, masking, and sanitizing restrictions in place. Many in the congregation were affected by the virus, which caused sickness, death, and death of loved ones, as well as severe isolation especially for those who were not equipped to join online gatherings. Many who had worshipped with us before the pandemic did not return to worship when the building re-opened. However, the pandemic did improve our online offerings, especially streaming of worship services, that opened our “doors” to a wider world.

The United Methodist Church had been struggling for a number of years with differences in thought on the denomination's approach to political and social issues, with the flashpoint surrounding LGBTQ+ issues. The discussions led to a process for congregations to choose to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. While Paxton remained United Methodist, many congregations did disaffiliate, causing grief and pain across the denomination, reshuffling pastors, and changing district and conference boundaries. The new emerging spirit is one of hope and assurance that God will use these changes to build up the family of God.

Fifty Years of Ministry and Mission: Over the years, Paxton United Methodist Church has found many ways to serve God, its members, the community, and the world. A timeline of some major ministries and activities is provided later in this narrative. In November 2023, a Visioning Workshop helped members to describe how we see Paxton UMC today, and what we want to become. The outcome of that workshop, the "Paxton UMC Playbook," is also included later in this book.

Worship is at the core of our existence, along with Sunday School and Bible Study for adults, youth, and children. Vacation Bible School and Christian camping experiences have brought joy and introduced many to the love of Christ.

Mission and Service projects are central to the Paxton congregation. There are many, from "The Red Shirt Gang" formed in 1987, and Sew For Peace started in 2004, to more recently begun activities such as Rise Against Hunger meal packing events. Ongoing support for the

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the interdenominational Mission Central (opened in 2002), has included financial and volunteer donations as well as taking on specific projects such as assembly of disaster relief buckets.

Prayer is a vital part of our Christian walk, with small groups formed across the years to pray together and to offer prayer for those in need.

Connecting our spiritual life with our physical and mental lives has been accomplished in several ways. For example, education has been tied to faith through Paxton Daycare and the Cora Martin Weeber Scholarship Trust. Christian sports leagues, most notably the dartball league and Christian Churches United golf tournaments, add to Christian fellowship. Paxton UMC



hosted Spaghetti dinners, Gospel buffets, and the Golden Agers Club to bring the community inside our church building.

Whether in worship, Bible study, service, or mission, fellowship is key – what more joyful way to grow and share God’s Love?

Timeline of Some Notable Activities, Missions, and Ministries

1970-present	Dartball (begun at Sixth Street church in 1931)
1986-1997	Stephen’s Ministry
1980-1989	Farm Show Refreshment Stand
1980-?	Spaghetti dinners
1980-present	Easter Eggs
1987-present	Mission work camps
1988-present	Cora Martin Weeber Scholarship program
1989-2014	Paxton Daycare
1994-present	Central PA Food Bank, Manna Food Pantry
1996-2007	Gospel Buffet
1996-present	Daystar Center for Recovery
2004-present	Sew for Peace

Several New Projects in 2024:

- Pastor Allshouse is leading worship services at several Senior Living facilities in the area.
- We are hosting and supplying support to a Nepali Christian congregation new to the area.
- In addition to AA, which has met in our building for many years, AlAnon now holds meetings and events here.
- Several small groups, meeting in a restaurant or in homes, have re-emerged.

Pastors serving Paxton United Methodist Church

Henry Murray	1970-1971
Harold E. Millard	1971-1975
Donald L. Smith	1975-1980
Jay Zimmerman	1980-1996
Donald Harper	1996-1997
D. Wayne Bender	1997-1999
Barbara Yorks	2000-2002
Richard Denison*	2002-2004
Paul Herring/ Joanne Link*	2004-2005
Richard Denison*	2005-2009
Bonnie L. Ort	2009-2015
Brent T. Salsgiver	2015-2022
Richard Denison	2022-2023
Gary Allshouse	2023-present

* In 2004, Richard Denison was called to active duty with the National Guard and served as a chaplain in Afghanistan. Pastors Paul Herring and Jody Link served Paxton in an interim capacity until his return. Then in 2022, after his retirement, Richard Denison returned to Paxton as an intentional interim pastor.

Our local church has had at least three candidates for ministry
and seven candidates for lay speaker.

[Celebrating Paxton UMC 's Past, Present & Future](#)

The congregation celebrated the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, the 50th anniversary of Paxton UMC, and Consecration Sunday. The congregation, old friends, family and UPASANA, the Nepali community church congregation using the building joined in the service, luncheon and fellowship. Thank you to all those who organized, brought food, planted geraniums and joined in the sharing of God's love.

Photos from May 19, 2024



