

# CHURCH HISTORY: HYDE PARK UNITED METHODIST



## A 116-year-old Tradition of Faithful Discipleship

What began as a Sunday school meeting in a schoolhouse at Platt Street and Magnolia became a long line of faithful Christians committed to living out the words of Christ.

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HISTORY

John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother Charles (1707-1788) mark the origin of the Methodist Church. As their movement grew in England, it became apparent that Methodism also was successfully spreading to America as a lay movement. The church was founded as The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784. By the 1800's, the denomination grew through the introduction of revivals and camp meetings. The United Methodist Church represents the merging of three streams of tradition: Methodism, the Church of the United Brethren and The Evangelical Association. The union was created in 1968.

## 1899: HYDE PARK UNITED METHODIST IS BORN

On the threshold of the 20th Century, many children grew up along the sandy streets south of Grand Central (now Kennedy Boulevard) and along the streetcar line that ran along South Boulevard, Bayshore Boulevard and out to Ballast Point. Methodist families went to First United Methodist Church on the east side of the Hillsborough River, when they could travel, by horse and buggy, across a rather undependable drawbridge. One Sunday afternoon three families met together to start a Sunday School for neighborhood children. On March 12, 1899, 30 people gathered for the first meeting in a two-room schoolhouse on the corner of Magnolia and Platt Streets where the Fire Station now stands. The congregation was officially organized in 1900 with 29 charter members. Several of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren are active members of our congregation today. The newly renovated church sanctuary was originally constructed in 1907 with a "half-round" worship space and two story classrooms.

## 1953-1980's: REMODELING AND RENOVATION

In 1953, the Sanctuary was totally remodeled so that the chancel and choir loft were located on the south end away from Platt Street in the area that had been classrooms. Straight wooden pews were added to the new and enlarged Sanctuary space. The entrance and narthex were up a flight of steps on Platt Street. The original Education Building was constructed in 1922, with a fellowship hall on the ground floor and classrooms on the upper floors. The Fellowship Hall and Chapel were built in 1954. The Chapel was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Laurie Ray, who led the congregation in the building program of 1953-54. The Fellowship Hall was named in honor of former pastor J. Lloyd Knox when he was elected to the Episcopacy in 1984.

## MILLENNIAL RENOVATION AND EXPANSION

In 1993-94, the 21st Century Task Force led the congregation in defining God's mission and vision for our future. A master plan provided for facilities to help our congregation to effectively fulfill its mission in the 21st century. In 1999, we consecrated the new 26-classroom Wesley Center, 6,000-square-foot Activities Center and Ministry Offices, and removed the old education building. The renovated Sanctuary was dedicated August 9-10,

2003, attracting more than 1,500 worshipers. J. Lloyd Knox Hall, originally built in 1954, was renovated to include new adult meeting rooms, music rehearsal rooms, a media center and the Aldersgate Corner Bookstore and Coffee Shop. The adjoining Laurie Ray Chapel was reoriented and enlarged with the Chancel now on the north end.



The new and renovated facilities cost approximately \$11 million and serve as the hub for worship, education, caring, and ministries of witness and service in support of the church's mission of Making God's Love Real.

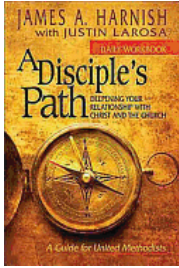
In May 2003, The Rev. Dr. James A. Harnish, who began his ministry here in 1992, received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary.

## 21ST CENTURY: DISCIPLESHIP AND DOWNTOWN

In 2004, the Acts 2 Task Force formed to identify how the church will continue to Make God's Love Real in the context of the community we will serve in the 21st century. Members identified and embraced three "Acts 2 Imperatives:"

- **Find Your Path**—encouraging each to take the next steps in their faith journeys
- **Cross the River**—intentionally focusing on sending members out in ministry in our community, especially downtown
- **Claim the Future**—planning proactively to ensure that facilities help us expand God's kingdom.

On April 15, 2007, the church dedicated and opened the 9,000-square-foot Magnolia Building on the south side of the campus. It serves Youth Ministries, Magnolia worship service and various church and community meetings. Built on the site former longtime tavern, the opening marked the fulfillment of dreams dating back decades.



Through 2007 and 2008, our congregation developed an intentional framework for discipleship, what we call the Discipleship Pathway. It was embraced by our congregation, and published in 2012 as “A Disciple’s Path” by the Rev. Jim Harnish and the Rev. Justin LaRosa. “A Disciple’s Path” has been used by hundreds of congregations nationwide.

In September 2011, the 11 Magnolia worship service was launched in the Magnolia Building, a modern contemporary service that invites all to “come as you are” to informal worship.

In late 2012, members voted to accept from the Florida Conference downtown property (formerly First United Methodist Church) for use in expanding Methodist ministry downtown. This decision affirmed the vision and present opportunity to “Cross the River” by ministering to and with downtown residents as envisioned in 2004. In 2013, a Downtown Launch Team began to work and pray to discern God’s call on this congregation for downtown.



By 2014 the purpose became clear: “To make God’s love real by inviting spiritual but not religious people in downtown Tampa to experience the love of God and become disciples of Jesus Christ.” We envisioned a downtown worshiping community and a community gathering space for downtown residents and workers. The downtown campus was named “The Portico.”

## 2014-2015: FROM JIM HARNISH TO MAGREY DEVEGA

In January 2014, the Rev. Dr. James A. Harnish announced his retirement as Hyde Park’s longest-serving senior pastor, 1992-2014. The church’s Activities Center, the hub of campus ministry activities, was renamed the “Harnish Activities Center” in honor of the 22-year ministry of Jim and Martha Harnish. Duke Divinity School have established the James A. Harnish Scholarship for seminary students in his honor.



The Rev. Magrey deVega

Bishop Kenneth Carter appointed the Rev. Roger Scholtz of South Africa as Interim Senior Pastor from Sept. 1, 2014 until June 30, 2015.

In January 2015, Bishop Carter announced that the Rev. Magrey deVega would be appointed to serve as Hyde Park's new senior pastor, effective July 2015. The appointment was homecoming of a kind for Magrey, who Magrey had previously served as Hyde Park Associate Pastor from 2000-2007.