



ARCHIVES & HISTORY

General Commission on Archives and History

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

P.O. Box 127
Madison, NJ 07940

Michelle Merkel-Brunskill
Executive Assistant

August 25, 2017

St. John UM Church
680 Fordville Road
Fairfield Twp., NJ 08302

Dear faithful congregants,

We have received the completed application for St. John UM Church located in Fairfield Twp., New Jersey. Congratulations! The site has been registered as United Methodist Historic Site Number 539.

We are pleased to add St. John UM Church to the register and will maintain a file of information here in Madison on the site. We would love to receive any additional items for the file, including materials from a dedication service or other special event, historical data, and photographs.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Michelle Merkel-Brunskill

APPLICATION for REGISTRATION of a
UNITED METHODIST HISTORIC SITE
GENERAL COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940; 973-408-3189

Name of Site: St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville)

Location of Site: 680 Fordville Road, Fairfield Twp, NJ 08302

Authorized as a "United Methodist Historic Site"


By action of: The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey
(Annual, Central, or Jurisdictional Conference)

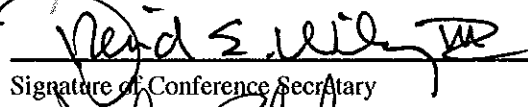
Meeting at: Wildwood Convention Center

City: Wildwood

State (or equivalent): New Jersey

Date: May 18 - 21, 2017


Signature of President/Chair, Conference Commission on Archives and History


Signature of Conference Secretary


Signature of Resident Bishop

PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF THE CONFERENCE RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING DESIGNATION OF SITE

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - FOR GENERAL COMMISSION USE ONLY

No. 539 Received by Michelle Merkel-Brunskill Date 8/17/2017

Additional Data Requested NA By _____ Received _____

\$
75 Registration Fee Received Yes Registered 8/17/17 By M. Merkel-Brunskill

Copies of this report sent to:

Conference Archives at _____

Jurisdictional Archives at _____

Marker sent to: Left on desk of Mark Shenise

Date 8/25/17

Marker installed by _____ Date _____

Description:

Please attach a brief description of the Historic Site and its significance in the history of the Conference, area, and/or general church (100 to 200 words).

Supporting Data and Materials:

If there are published or manuscript copies of articles, pamphlets, books, brochures, clippings, etc. related to the Site, please list these. Please enclose copies of evidence for the General Commission's files.

Photographs of Site:

Please enclose black and white photos of the Site. These should be large enough to discern significant details but not in excess of 8" x 10".

Data on Historic Site:

Date of Original Construction or Event 1861

Architect (if any) Not Available

Builder (if any) Not Available

Original Owner St. John Methodist Episcopal Church

Present Owner St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville)

Address 680 Fordville Rd., Fairfield Twp, NJ 08302

Telephone 845-451-5150

Approximate Value \$1,010,000

Mortgage (if any) \$0.00

Has owner been informed of pending Conference action? Yes

What is the Owner's attitude toward visitors? Active Church, welcoming on Sundays, by arrangement other days of the week.

Access: Describe route to Site from a main road: From Bridgeton, Rt. 49 East, turn left on Fordville Road

Parking? Parking available **Handicapped access?** Ramp to sanctuary

Upkeep: What provision has been or will be made for maintenance?

Caretaker Name Board of Trustees of St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville)

Address 680 Fordville Road, Fairfield Twp, NJ 08302

Telephone 845-451-5150

Reception: Is competent guide service available?

Name Sunday at Church, the ushers, weekday, by arrangement

Address 680 Fordville Road, Fairfield Twp, NJ 08032

Telephone 845-452-5150

Is there a charge for guide service? No Is a donation expected? Donation to church welcomed

Publicity:

The designation "Registered United Methodist Historic Site" will be called to the attention of the following historical agencies:

Local: TBA

State/Regional: TBA

Others: TBA

What has been or will be done to promote it to the public through:

Newspapers: TBD

Radio: TBD

Television: TBD

Other media: TBD

Publicity items (brochures, postcards, etc.) available: Church Brochure

What person or organization will be responsible for an ongoing program of publicity? Church Council

From whom may publicity be obtained?

Name Church Council

Address 680 Fordville Road, Fairfield Twp, NJ 08032

Telephone 845-452-5150

Who will affix the "REGISTERED UNITED METHODIST HISTORIC SITE" marker?

Name Church Council and Board of Trustees

Address 680 Fordville Road, Fairfield, Twp, NJ 08032

Telephone 845-452-5150 e-mail

When? TBD

What public ceremony will mark the event? TBD

This report has been prepared by:

Name Walter Jones, Archivist || Donald DeGroat, Vice-Chair

Address 26 Edgewater Dr., Matawan, NJ 07747 || P.O. Box 25, Long Pond, PA 18334

Telephone 732-566-5321 || 570-646-9298

Date June 26, 2017

To whom shall the marker be sent? (DO NOT use post office box address - shipped UPS)

Name Picked up by either Mark Shenise, John Callanan or Don DeGroat

Address

Telephone

GCAH
Revised April 1, 2001

St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville)
Fordville, New Jersey

Methodism came to the Bridgeton area of NJ through itinerant preachers. In 1799 Rev. Michael Swing visited the area. To some he is the "father" of Methodism in this region. In the intervening years, the Old Stone Church in Fairton was a start. Then, the locally known Swing's Meeting House. Under Rev. Reuben Cuff, a meetinghouse in Gouldtown. Various other buildings served as school, meeting house, or church for local Methodist societies.

Rev. Peter Schureman dedicated the Lummis School, moved from Gouldtown, renaming it Ebenezer. However in 1841 the church split as a group, including founding members Jacob Pierce, Adrian Pierce, Freeman Pierce, Hosea Pierce and the families and followers who sought another path, an ethnic path to maintain their ethnic, native roots. It took a while but with God's help this group built their first building, a one-room log cabin, which served both as schoolhouse and meetinghouse; named The Piercetown School and Meetinghouse.

In 1861 the church began plans to build a church which became St. John Methodist Episcopal Church, incorporated in 1863 as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Fordville. It was finally dedicated in 1865.

Much of the history is lost, except in some oral form. One thing certain, St. John was strongly connected to a remnant of the Lenni Lenape Community (also known as Tribe) in the Delaware Bay region. The building served as meeting house and school when no other was available to the Tribe. Improvements and additions were made in the ensuing years. Then in 2001 a small fire in the parish hall—a quickly contained fire—revealed major and extensive structural deterioration. The building was condemned and torn down. In May 2013 a new all purpose building was dedicated.

Native American heritage permeates the weekly service of worship. From prayers, to songs, to the youth drumming and dancing during a worship, the heritage is present. On the fifth Sunday worship is described as "total immersion." St. John is a welcoming and diverse church to compliment this Lenni Lenape heritage.

Over the years many trials and tribulations were met with the power of faith. A lawsuit emanating from the split, economic hardship, isolation as a native American congregation, death of a pastor (Rev. Richard Wilson while preaching), and in 1938 categorized as African-American and transferred to the Central Jurisdiction, Delaware Conference. Yet faith saw them through to this day.

St. John enabled the Tribe to remain strong in the Christian faith as well as their Native-American heritage. Church members are on the tribal council. Recent church contributions to the Annual Conference and beyond included:

- A 2015 Basic Skills/Bible Camp curriculum that focused on a bridge to Christian teaching and cultural ways. This camp attracted attention from Christian educators.
- Members are part of the District, Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). Some are part of the Northeast Jurisdiction CONAM.
- Members contributed to the recent Service of Repentance.
- A member of the Tribe has been asked to lead an opening prayer at Annual Conference.
- Some church members act as missionaries to reservation communities across the country.
- The Tribe and the St. John assisted in hosting duties for the Native American International Caucus in Vineland NJ October, 24-30, 2016. Members have attended previous meetings.
- Though on hiatus, the church is working with GNJC Archives and History on an oral history project.

With the strength of the Great Spirit God, St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) remains the only Native American rooted church in the conference. With a history dating to 1841, and well before that to the earliest itinerant preachers, St. John is strong in Christ as they minister to their community, the True Path, the Way, that all God's Children are intended to walk.

Bibliography

Rossello, Patricia Brief Historical Sketch of St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville: St. John United Methodist Church) 2014

Bundy, Roy E. Informal Historical Sketch (Fordville: St. John United Methodist Church) 2016

Steelman, Robert B. What God Has Wrought A History of the Southern New Jersey Conference of the United Methodist Church (Pennington: Southern New Jersey Conference Archives and History) 1886

Recommendation

St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville), Cumberland County, NJ, Historic Site

Whereas St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville), in Fordville, New Jersey is the home to many members of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Nation in Cumberland County New Jersey

Whereas many church members and Elders of the Tribe can trace Methodist roots back to the ministry of Reverend Michael Swain, who first itinerated to area in 1799.

Whereas predecessor families of the St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) split off from neighboring churches to form a Methodist Episcopal Church to maintain their tribal roots and traditions; and this congregation was chartered in 1841.

Whereas the church building has been a place of meeting for tribal affairs when none were available or allowed a place of ministry to help the spiritual and physical needs of those in need.

Whereas disciples from St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) currently serve on the Tribal Council of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Nation; one for over forty years.

Whereas St. John United Methodist Church (Church) once self-identified as a "hidden" church, because its heritage was not welcomed by Caucasian Methodists who forced it into the segregated Delaware Conference and since has become a leader in Native-American ministries to The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey reaching beyond to Northeast Jurisdiction.

Whereas St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) assisted the Annual Conference to plan a Service of Repentance, as directed by the 2012 General Conference.

Whereas St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) is a diverse congregation with strong Native American heritage that welcomes all who come to worship in many styles; including fifth Sunday heritage services, which engage youth as drummers and dancers.

Be It Resolved that The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey recognize St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville), in Fordville, New Jersey as an Annual Conference Historic Site for its unique ministry among the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Nation.

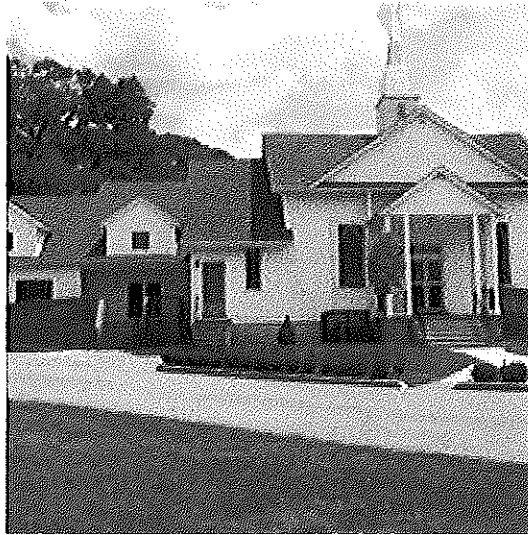
Rationale: St. John United Methodist Church (Fordville) is a historic Native American congregation with strong roots and ties within the African American and Anglo communities, as well as members of the Nanticoke Lenni Lenape Nation. Since the coming of Methodism around 1799, member families, who split from other churches in order to maintain their Native American heritage, have continued to worship God as Methodist Christians. In recent years this "hidden" church has become active in the Greater New Jersey Conference and beyond to share their heritage and ministry. The disciples of the Church are celebrating 175 years of history and ministry. It is appropriate to recognize their milestone for a unique and faithful church.

Submitted by:

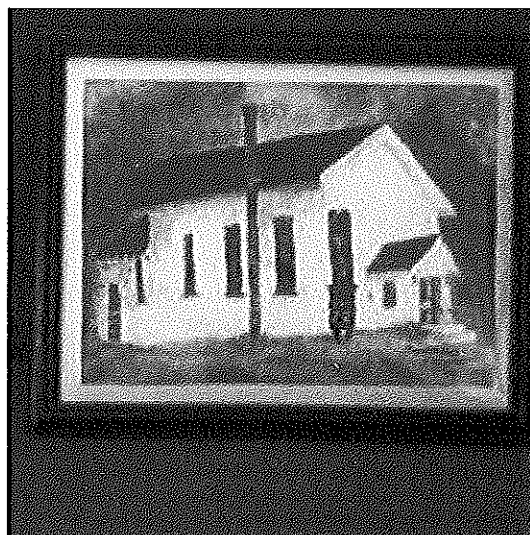
Rev. John D. Callanan, Chairperson
Commission on Archives and History

copied from page 49-50 of the Pre-conference Journal

Adopted May 22, 2017
by the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey



Sanctuary and Parish Hall



Older Sanctuary