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In the summer of 1816, a woman by the name of Harriet Reynolds opened a bakery stand in what is today Downtown New Albany.

Every day as she worked, she sang a simple hymn: “How tedious and tasteless the hours when Jesus no longer I see...”

She didn't know it then, but with that hymn she planted the seed for Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, a church that would still be rooted and growing 200 years later.

One day while Harriet was working and singing, a group of strangers from the East wandered by her bakery stand and heard her song.

Maybe they recognized the song from childhood, or maybe they were simply drawn in by the light of her faith. Either way, they were soon holding weekly class meetings together and practicing the Methodist faith.

In June of 1817, the group was approached by a circuit preacher named John Schrader, who offered to perform Holy Communion.

And with that, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church was born. They quickly followed on the heels of Indiana's statehood and became a legal entity.

Since its establishment in 1817, the church has survived through good times and bad times.

According to Bill Amerson, a member of Wesley Chapel for more than 40 years and the church's "unofficial historian," the continuity can be attributed to a dedicated congregation and clergy as well as a willingness by both to be flexible.

"We have had strong laity forever," said Bill. "A lot of the street names in New Albany, those guys or ladies were members of Wesley Chapel. So some of the founders of New Albany were members of Wesley Chapel."

As proof of the committed membership, Bill told the story of the church's first move.

Wesley Chapel moved in 1964 from Market Street to State Street, which was less populated at the time but held a promise of growth.

The congregation debated heatedly about the decision for months, and the final vote was split 49/51 in favor of the move. But when the church moved, most of those who had voted against still followed.

The church made a second move in 2013, from the New Albany area to their current location in Floyds Knobs.

"There's that friendly tension between schools and communities, and there's a rivalry between Floyd Central and New Albany," said Bill. "So for us to move out of New Albany and to move up here into the Floyd Central neighborhood, that was a big deal. But most everybody came along."

There have been many more changes throughout the years, and not every member has stuck around through them. One of most controversial issues has been with music, a controversy not limited to recent years.

In fact, when the first choir was introduced in the mid-1800s, there was so much debate as to where the choir should stand one member suggested they be put on wheels.

Recently, the church has begun to focus less on a hymn driven worship and more on a contemporary style of music.

This is in an effort to reach out to a younger crowd, who will hopefully carry the church on for years to come.

A focus on the younger crowd doesn't mean that older members have been forgotten, however. One of the services Wesley Chapel offers on Sunday morning still features a more traditional worship style, and many older members have been faithful to the church for decades.

The church's longest attending member is Bonnie Donan, who has been a member since 1937, and second by only one year is Warren Slider, a member since 1938.

Wesley Chapel's newest location features an updated facility and more than five times the acreage of the old location on State Street.

Although they've moved forward with the times, the church hasn't forgotten their roots.

They've been known to sing Harriet Reynold's hymn on the occasional Sunday morning, and there's a creek out back where members are able to be baptized in the same way baptisms were done over 200 years ago.

According to Bill, one thing has remained the same through the years: a passion for evangelism.

“Service is a big deal,” said Bill. “If you’re going to come and be involved here, we want you to come to church and worship and know Jesus, but we also want you to share Jesus outside the doors.”

The church is involved with many local missions, as well as foreign missions in Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru.

This July, those who have moved on from Wesley Chapel to start ministries around the world will return home to celebrate with their original church family.

The church has a few more celebrations planned for the year, but most of all they want to spend time appreciating one another and everything that makes Wesley Chapel great.

Two hundred years of worship, service, and outreach is a big accomplishment, but its just the beginning for Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church.

“I just think that Wesley Chapel’s ministry has made the community a better place over the years,” said Bill. “And I believe that about all churches—but not all churches make it 200 years.”