N. DISCONTINUED CHURCHES

ABERDEEN FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The history of Aberdeen First United Methodist Church actually dates back to 1884. Up until then, Aberdeen had few houses, one of which belonged to city pioneer Sam Benn, for whom the Sam Benn Park and the high school gymnasium are named. Sam Benn was one of our church's trustees in 1885.

One of our first pastors was *Charles McDermoth*, who took an active role in the construction of our first church building, a wood frame structure at the corner of First and "F" Streets, with a parsonage next door. The Cosmopolis church was built the next year, and Hoquiam's in 1890.

Reverend McDermoth left for Portland after three years, and in 1899, he returned to Aberdeen for another four years. *Reverend McDermoth* was so well-loved in Aberdeen that the nearby McDermoth grade school is named after him.

The Aberdeen Methodist Episcopal Church began looking for a place to relocate, and in 1909, bought the land at Second and "I" Streets, less than a block from our present location. The parsonage was built in 1910 for a whopping $3500. The church itself was built in stages, with the first services held downstairs in 1912, and the huge auditorium was completed several years later with generous donations from the community.

Fundraising for our present building began in 1961, with groundbreaking in 1965, and we moved into this building in 1966, when *Dr. Howard Yoder* was the pastor. The Cosmopolis church was replaced during that time by a portable building, but in 1968, it closed and merged into our congregation. We continued to honor that church with our Cosi Chapel just off the sanctuary. Eventually, the old parsonage was demolished, and we bought a house up the hill on Broadway for use as our parsonage, which we owned from 1970 to 2005. The site of our 1912 church and its parsonage is now a vacant lot.

For many years, this church had clam chowder dinners to raise funds for the Claude Major Memorial Scholarship Fund. William Claude Major, an African-American born in Missouri, moved to Grays Harbor in 1912, about the same time our church at Second and "I" was getting underway. He served in World War I, and upon his return to Aberdeen, he worked for the Grays Harbor Light and Railway Company and remained with it when it became the Grays Harbor PUD. And for 35 years, he was the secretary-treasurer of our Sunday School. Our longtime member Frances Harmon remembered that he "loved people and he loved living." He had a modest desk upstairs above the main entryway of our church, where he managed the church's records, especially those of the Sunday School. He died in 1956 at the age of 68, and at his funeral, the Whiteside Chapel across Second Street – which was next to our parsonage at the time – was filled to overflowing. Our pastor, *Elmer Beckman*, made the trip by rail back to Missouri, accompanying his body for a final service and burial. Within days, money began coming in from people, and his fellow workers at the PUD, and the Claude Major scholarship was born; it still exists

at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma.

An important person in this church for four decades was our secretary, Audrey Hesser. She began around 1960 and moved with the church to our new building, and worked five days a week until the late 1990's.

Some of our 1989 Hymnals bear the inscription, "Donated by M.M. Luncheon Group." They were an unofficial group of ladies, mostly in their 40s, that met monthly for lunch and fun, beginning in the early 1960s and continuing into the new millennium. They called themselves the Methodist Misfits. They were too old for the MYF youth group, but too young for the Women's Circles for the much older ladies. Some of the MM's were Methodists who only showed up when their kids sang in church, others were active Methodists, such as Bernice Rickey or Kathleen Hicks, and some were friends who weren't even Methodists! They usually had about 15 to 25 members. In the 1960s, they raised money for the new church, and over the decades, they collected money at each lunch date and donated it to many church causes, including the purchase of the 1989 Hymnals. They closed out their bank account by buying curtains for the parsonage in 2002 when *Wayne* and Sylvia Schneider lived there. Margaret Hardy (Bill's mom) was the last surviving MM, dying in 2016.

SEATTLE: MAGNOLIA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Magnolia United Methodist Church – originally Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church – first met in 1903 in the abandoned Robbins Hotel on what is now W. Dravus Street in the Interbay area of Seattle. Soon, that first worshipping group erected a tent on a nearby property to serve as a more permanent gathering place, complete with a stove and reed organ. Under the leadership of *Rev. J. M. Dennison*, the congregation secured land and was officially incorporated as Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church on July 5, 1904. The next year, they relocated to a more promising site at 22nd Ave W. and W. Dravus St. and had become an independent church by 1906.

In its early decades, Bethel was a vibrant center of community life. Strong pastoral leadership and dedicated lay involvement helped the church grow steadily, with a Sunday School that served as many as 150 children, and the Epworth League and Ladies Aid fostering both spiritual growth and social connection. A key figure during the early days was Professor M. E. Durham, who served for decades a Sunday School superintendent. As the surrounding community grew, the church flourished alongside it.

Like many congregations across the country, Bethel faced significant challenges during the Great Depression. Attendance and programming were limited due to financial hardship, and the church often relied on shared or part-time pastoral leadership. Shifting social patterns and World War II caused periods of decline, as well, but the church remained active. In 1946, the church considered relocating, but instead invested in major renovations, committed to the surrounding community even as growth was shaky.

By the early 1960's, the church had reached a critical inflection point, when closure was considered due to declining attendance and frequent pastoral transitions. Instead, new leadership and a renewed vision led the congregation to take a bold step forward, selling the Dravus property in 1962 and relocating to the YMCA on 34th Ave W. while developing plans for a new church home. In 1966, the congregation moved into a newly constructed church building on 34th Ave W., changing the name to Magnolia Methodist Church, marking a significant moment of renewal and commitment to ministry in the Magnolia neighborhood.

In the decades that followed, Magnolia continued to respond to community needs and cultural shifts, enduring cycles of growth and challenge while keeping youth programs, women's groups, education, and outreached central to its mission. The congregation employed creative approaches such as renting space, sharing pastoral leadership, expanding lay involvement, and hosting online services to sustain itself through times of uncertainty. Through 45 pastors and countless lay leaders, Magnolia UMC has provided a relational connection and spiritual grounding for the Magnolia neighborhood and beyond for more than 120 years. It has been sustained by the faith, generosity, and commitment of its people.

Magnolia UMC will close its doors on June 21, 2026. Discovery Montessori School, a treasured partner organization for more than 25 years, will continue in the building on W. 34th St. Ecumenical partners in the neighborhood will continue some of the vital ministries begun at Magnolia, and the legacy of care will continue.