



*Ordinary people learning to love like Jesus.*

## Rooted in Faith, Growing in Grace: The Story of Chelsea First UMC

For over 170 years, Chelsea First United Methodist Church has stood as a beacon of faith, hope, and community in the heart of downtown Chelsea. Our story began in 1853, when the Methodist Episcopal Church of Chelsea was officially organized. In those early days, clergy traveled from Ann Arbor to preach and care for the fledgling congregation. Just six years later, in 1859, the church built its first permanent home on Park Street—the same site we still call home today. Rev. B.I. Ives became our first regularly appointed minister, and by 1866, a parsonage was added next door to support the growing church family. Tragedy struck in January 1899 when the wooden church building was lost to a fire. But with resilient faith, the congregation rebuilt. In just thirteen months, the beautiful stone structure that still stands today rose in its place. Fittingly, the dedication sermon in February 1900 was preached by Rev. Ives, returning to bless the church he helped establish decades earlier.

As Chelsea grew, so did our congregation. By 1939, more than 300 people called Chelsea First UMC their church home. The challenges of World War II impacted our community deeply, yet the post-war years brought renewed energy and expansion. By the late 1950s, we had outgrown our space once again. In response, the Educational Wing was built, beginning in 1959 and dedicated in 1963, to better serve our thriving children's and adult ministries.

In 1982, the congregation made a pivotal decision: to remain rooted in our downtown location and continue serving Chelsea with love and purpose. That commitment led to further renovations, including a new main entrance, elevator, and accessible facilities in 1992. Momentum continued with the construction of the education wing and Grams Hall, dedicated in 1996, providing space for fellowship, hospitality, and mission.

In 2014, we launched the *Restore – Renew – Reach Out* Campaign, a bold effort to restore our historic sanctuary and ensure its beauty and safety for future generations. Thanks to the generosity and vision of our members, those renovations were completed in 2015.

Today, Chelsea First United Methodist Church is more than a building—it's a vibrant spiritual home. With robust ministries in music, mission, worship, and Christian education for all ages, we continue to be shaped by our past and energized for the future.

We are deeply rooted—and joyfully reaching forward. And the best is yet to come.

