

First United Methodist Church of New Iberia
History
3/8/2019 by Lynn DeRouen

First United Methodist Church of New Iberia was organized in the 1800's and has been a congregation very involved in community activities since it came into existence. The church facility is listed in the national registry of historic places.

Our church has a rich history, and served as the home of the first library in New Iberia, and was the driving force in the creation of many programs such as the Community Concert Association, Les Sons du Teche, and other programs related to music and the arts.

Several defining periods should be highlighted concerning our church. In the 1960's, in addition to the increased congregational attendance due to the baby boom, there was a U.S. Naval Air Station established in New Iberia. With the addition of more local members, plus the influx of those associated with the air base, our church was bursting at the seams. To facilitate the growth, we built a large adjacent educational building. At the time, it was necessary to handle the size and interests of our congregation. (The air base was ultimately closed due to federal budget cuts).

Some twenty years ago, an opportunity arose for us to buy a nearby building which was formerly a drugstore and an adjacent doctor's office. The main building is our ministry center now. The same building also serves as a home for drug court. The adjacent building is a home for the local indigent defender's office. Both facilities provide rental income for the church.

After Hurricane Katrina and Rita, our church formed Rebuild Iberia, which was created to help those whose properties were damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes. That activity carried on for several years, and our church not only provided workers and monetary support, but also housing for visiting volunteers to help with hurricane relief.

Unfortunately, over the past twenty years, we have experienced a consistent downturn in both church attendance and giving. While our facilities are wonderful, they are old and expensive to maintain. It has become difficult to afford the many things which are normally budgeted in an active church. Many of our faithful givers have passed away, and others have moved away to nearby growing areas like Youngsville and Broussard.

We have had dozens of pastors during our history. However, for almost the past two decades, we have had only two. Rev. Scott Bullock was appointed to our church for 17 years, and was transferred in 2018, when our current minister Rev. Craig Davis was appointed.

Despite the struggles, there are many things we have done in outreach for which we can be proud. We have a weekly supper for the poor, manned by a rotating group of volunteers. We make our church facilities available to many different local groups,

including AA, senior dance groups, scouting, and many others. For many years we have held Vacation Bible School each summer, but it has become harder and harder to staff and run this activity.