

About Our Churches

Written by Rose (Fales) Bledsoe, dated 12 Dec 2017; revised 10 May 2023

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[In 2013, the Alger, Standish and Sterling churches were assigned as parts “of a three-point charge.” – MIGenWeb]

Standish

Beacon of Light United Methodist Church

201 S. Forest Street

Community United Methodist Church of Standish began as part of the Pinconning Methodist circuit in October 1872. These worshippers, led by Rev. O.J. Perrin, met in homes and at the Our Theater location until 1878. The group disbanded until 1891, at which time they were paired with Sterling worshippers under the leadership of Rev. D.E. Birtch, and continued to meet at Our Theater until completion of the First Methodist Episcopal Church building in 1893.

The building was destroyed by fire in November 1939, but then-pastor J.W. LeVan immediately organized a building committee, and they had a groundbreaking ceremony in May 1940. Bishop Raymond Wade performed dedication of the Community Methodist Church on December 15, 1940. Groundbreaking for the educational wing took place in April 1959, and Bishop Marshal Reed consecrated the new building in October 1959.

The denomination became United Methodist with the merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren Churches by a vote held April 23, 1968, at the Uniting Conference in Dallas, Texas. The bell tower, largely funded through memorial donations, was dedicated May 24, 1987.

After a long tenure by Pastor Devin Chisholm, Detroit Annual Conference Bishop Deborah Kiesey appointed Rev. James Payne to serve the Standish congregation in January 2013. At that time, Conference leadership assigned Community United Methodist Church part of a three-point charge that included Sterling and Alger.

In 2018, congregants of the Sterling United Methodist Church and Community UMC in Standish voted to merge, with subsequent creation of the newly named “Beacon of Light” in Standish and closure of the Sterling location. After building renovations and filing of all merger documents, the blended congregation met for 2019 Easter service in the Standish sanctuary. Alger had voted to become a stand-alone congregation served weekly by a district superintendent appointee.

Bishop David Bard approved partnership of Arenac Christ (Au Gres) UMC with Beacon of Light in 2020, both being served by Pastor Jim Payne until his retirement in July 2021. Bishop Bard also appointed Rev. Russ Poirier to assume duties as clergy for both churches.

Alger

Alger United Methodist Church
7786 West Newberry Street

Alger United Methodist Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of its building in 2012. The original was a white frame structure built in 1912 with funds raised by Ladies' Aid efforts and help from the Methodist Conference. Mrs. J.W. Dunn bought the bell for \$100 and donated it to the church in honor of her daughter, Edith Dunn Kerr.

The first clergy appointed to the congregation was Rev. Joshua Bacon, who served the congregation from 1910 to 1912. The first funeral was held in the new building May 5, 1913, in memory of Mr. Jobe Estes.

Alger was in a three-point charge with the Sterling and Standish churches at the time of its inception but underwent many partnership reassignments over the years, including status as a three-point charge with Sterling and Garfield until 2013, at which time Alger again became part of a three-point charge with Sterling and Standish. Rev. James Payne, having been assigned to Alger in 2010 by Bishop Jonathan Keaton of Detroit Annual Conference, led the congregation in worship until 2019. At that time, Alger members voted to opt out of merger with the Sterling and Standish congregations. They have since been served by various district superintendent appointees and lay speakers.

Sterling

Former location: 201 East Main Street

Sterling United Methodist Church was built in 1885, with a sanctuary seating capacity of 80 and three classrooms. Sterling became a two-point charge with Standish in the 1930s during the pastorate of John W. LeVan. The parsonage was located on Greenwood Avenue in Sterling and was sold in the early 1930s. Construction of the newer parsonage, located just 100 feet from the church, occurred in 1964. The parsonage building was sold after merger of the Sterling and Standish United Methodist Churches in 2019, with clergy taking up residence in the Standish parsonage.

Bishop Jonathan Keaton of Detroit Annual Conference United Methodist Church appointed Pastor James Payne to the Sterling church in 2010. At that time, Sterling partnered with Alger and Garfield as a three-point charge. In January 2013, the Conference reassigned the three-point charge as Sterling, Alger, and Standish under the pastorate of Rev. James Payne.

The Sterling and Standish congregations voted to merge in 2018 and decided upon "Beacon of Light" United Methodist Church as their new identity. The Sterling church building was sold to become a wedding and event venue, and the blended congregation began meeting in the Standish sanctuary at Eastertime in 2019. Upon the retirement of Pastor Jim Payne in July 2021, Bishop David Bard appointed Rev. Russ Poirier to serve as clergy for Beacon of Light UMC.