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The Friendsville United Methodist Church

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

and its Beautiful Stained Glass Windows

The first church built in Friendsville, Maryland was the Methodist Episcopal Church located at 623 Water Street. On May 24, 1879 John T. Garey and his wife Priscilla deeded a lot on the west bank of the Youghiogheny River to Thomas H. Cuppett, William H. Steele, L. A. Friend, David Kent and J. T. Garey, Trustees of the M.E. Church "as a place of Divine Worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

The first church building was a frame structure that served the church for approximately 16 years and was then replaced by a larger frame structure in 1898. When a fire destroyed the larger frame structure in 1920 the congregation was invited by the Lutheran Church to worship with them; the invitation was accepted and the Methodist congregation worshipped in the Lutheran Church till September 1922.

The contract for the present church was given to F. G. Fox July 19, 1920. By the fall of 1921, work on the church had come to a standstill and the people were discouraged, but efforts to raise money quickly renewed interest in the building. The new First Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated August 6, 1922.

A prominent feature of the new church was the stained glass windows, artistic creations that have been enjoyed for decades by those attending services. What is not so obvious is the unique construction process that is invisible to the untrained eye.

Recently discovered documents revealed that the stained glass artwork was designed and installed by the Von Gerichten Ecclesiastic Studios from Columbus Ohio, a company that described itself as the largest stained glass studio in North America. In August 1921, correspondence

occurred between Mr. Arnold Fox, representing F. G. Fox and Sons of Friendsville, and the Ohio company. Information contained in the letter provided interesting details about the windows.

The church sent a full size paper outline of the window opening to the Von Gerichten craftsmen who, in turn, created several designs with accompanying prices for the church congregation to consider. All designs were to be completed in the German style of glass making. Windows were subsequently purchased by the congregation.

The window frames were made by F. G. Fox in his Friendsville wood planing mill. After completing the frames, he discovered they would not fit through his shop doors, so he had to cut the doors larger. The windows were installed and enjoyed by the congregation for more than a half century before repairs were needed.

Kevin Kamauf, owner of Reliable Glass Company, Inc. of Cresaptown, Maryland, carried out restorations of the windows on two occasions, in 1984 and during the fall and winter of 2012-2013. According to Mr. Kamauf, stained glass is held with came, a technical term for "H" shaped metal channels. Artists often layer different colors of glass to create desired hues and typically each layer is held within its own came. "The center section of each of the four large windows at the Friendsville Church is unique. There are two layers of glass inside the same lead came. I never saw that feature before or since. The window construction is unique to our region," stated Mr. Kamauf.

Due to the generosity of many generations, the Friendsville United Methodist Church continues to hold services on the same property donated to them over 130 years ago.

Information sources include The Glades Star, church records, and the assistance of Carol Squires.

Facing page: Exterior of Friendsville United Methodist Church, Water Street.

Windows (left to right): "Jesus with Open Arms," donor: Building Committee J.W. Friend, Arnold G. Fox, H.J. Black, D.S. Custer, H.L. Wolf, and W.W. Savage.

"Jesus the Shepherd," donor: Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

"Jesus Knocking at the Door," donor: Rev. D.A. Friend and wife Phebe M. Friend.

"Jesus in the Garden," donor: Knights of Pythias.

Left photo: Donor, Owen Foster Friend (left window). Right window in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Brison Welch.

Cross and Flame over Alter: In memory of Wilbur G. Fox by his wife, Jane G. Fox and sons, James and Frederick.

