

# Breckenridge Chapel

July 1

# 2015



The State of  
the Church

Dear Friends,

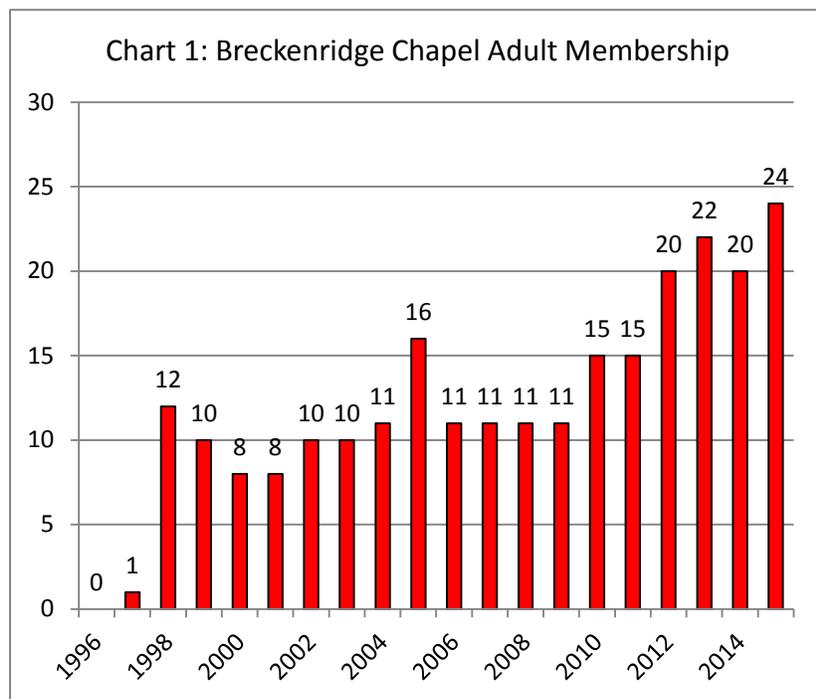
On the thirtieth of June we reached the half way mark of this year in which we have experienced some changes in the last year or so – new members, new parsonage residents, the Jung family (Paul, Eunice, Josh, and Irene) moving to California, and other things – and this is a good time for me to give a state-of-the-church report to you. It also brings me to the end of five years as your pastor – and the start of our sixth year together!

You all know that I like to keep statistics and make charts, so hopefully I can present some information in images so that you may better visualize our progress together.

### 1. Membership

Belonging to a church family is so much more than just having your name recorded somewhere and having a certificate. Breckenridge Chapel has never really pushed people to join – though we do not discourage that, either!

Membership is one way to express your commitment to God through a specific church family and denomination; but it is not the only way. We make room for you to



follow how God has led you to express your commitment.

My reports to our denomination at the end of the year include Adult Membership. This report helps our district, conference, and denominational leadership to get an idea of our viability as a congregation.

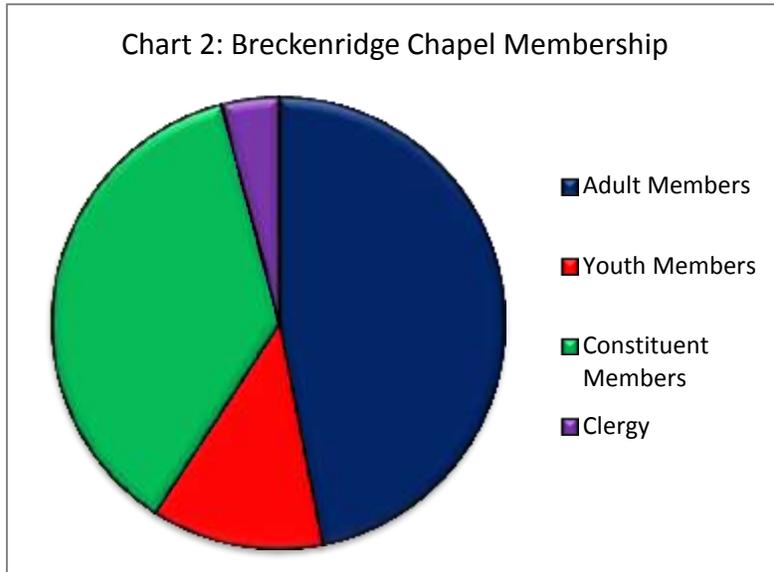
Chart 1 shows the growth of Breckenridge Chapel's Adult Membership since 1996. That year was the time when Rev. Vince

Spencer came to "re-start" the church, and it is the point where I have solid data for membership.

Of course, twenty-four Adult Members as of 30 June 2015 does not look like many, but it does show immediate and long-term growth. After a couple of years I move inactive

members to another list, so this number is accurate and valid. It also shows twenty percent growth in the last six months.

As I wrote above, there is more to our membership than just that statistic. If we look at everyone who “belongs” to our church family, we have many more “members.” At the end of the year I report both baptized Adult Members (24 on 30 June) and baptized Children and Youth Members (6 on 30 June).



We have many persons whom I call “Constituent Members” – persons who are very much a part of our church family, but who have chosen not to join. There are eighteen persons in that category. Finally, we have two ordained Elders (Lee Twombly and me) who call Breckenridge Chapel our church home, but are technically members of the New South Conference. Chart 2 gives a good depiction of our “true” membership.

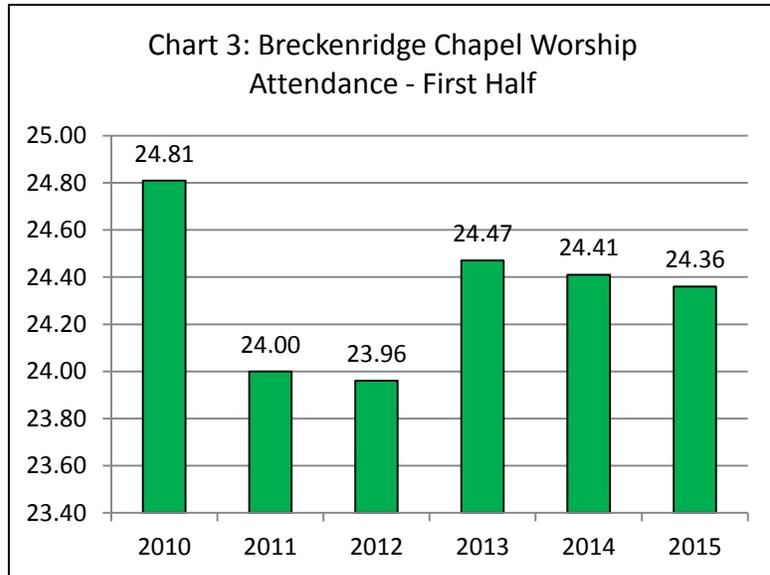
## 2. Worship

The life of our congregation centers on Sunday worship. From my perspective our 11:00am worship is relaxed, yet respectful. We enjoy worshipping God in the company of each other. Throughout my years here we have added and removed parts of the order to keep things “fresh.” We will miss Rev. Paul Jung’s leadership – especially with the singing of the Praise Team (hopefully we can get that going again). Katherine Nally’s extended illness has required some creativity to fill our music gap for now, but everyone has been cooperative, and we all look forward to Katherine’s return.

Worship attendance on Sunday at 11:00am has held steady since 2010. Since then our attendance has usually increased from the first half to the second half of the year. A better picture of our attendance is shown if we look at the first half attendance of every year. Chart 3 shows worship attendance for the first half of the year beginning in 2010. Take a careful look at the chart. Statistically there has been no decrease or increase in our 11:00am Sunday Worship Attendance for the first half of the year since 2010. For example, the difference between 2014 and 2015 is an average of 0.05 persons per Sunday. Our average over these six years is 24.34.

Perspective is everything. I often tell my friends who are serving large churches that at Breckenridge Chapel our official Adult Membership is 24 and our average worship attendance is 24.34. In a society where attendance of thirty-percent (30%) of membership is seen as good, our ratio is 102%!

Since February 2014 we have a second worship service on Sunday at 6:30pm – the Belmont Village Preaching Point. There is not much history to report here. I can say that the first half of 2014 averaged 17.63 persons and the first half of 2015 average 19.32 – an increase of 9.6%.



I encourage you to come and participate in this thirty minute worship when you can. It is a good ministry for us to the residents of this retirement home. You may also come for dinner before worship as a guest of Belmont Village!

There is actually a third option if you want to supplement your worship or have a devotional at home. Virtual Church is a website that I manage. I have posted at that site weekly worship/devotion videos and audio sermons by my father, Dr. William W. Slider. The videos are about fifteen minutes and audio sermons are about twenty-five minutes. You may go to <http://www.VirtualFMC.com>. "Attendance" is measured by page views – number of times someone has gone to the site and viewed it. Through the first half of 2015 this site has average thirty-seven page views per week.

So, our average weekly worship attendance from all sources is about eighty. We have a greater impact than we realize!

### 3. Youth

The young people are an important part of our church family. It is important that the young persons who are in our church family are full and equal participants in the ministry to and by all of us. We need to combine this full involvement in the whole church with some specially-focused activities and ministries for young people.

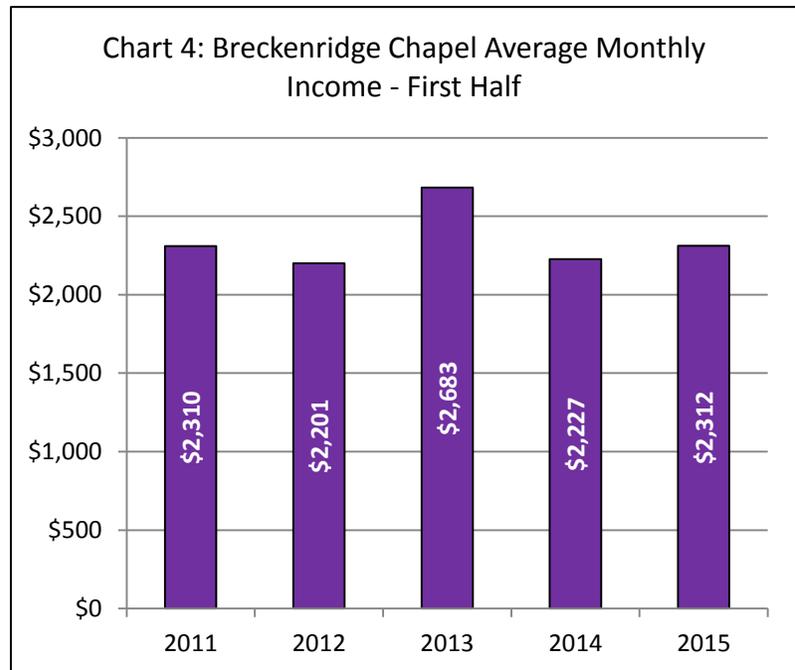
I appreciate the opportunity to have our son, William, to be working with me here at Breckenridge Chapel in order to provide this focused ministry. The youth worship that William leads every other Sunday has averaged five persons so far in 2015.

We will miss Josh and Irene Jung, but we have a good nucleus of young persons with Maddie, Kyle, and Max. William is planning and working to expand the youth ministry in number and activity.

#### 4. Finances

Since 2011 our church's income has remained constant except for the one year that we rented the parsonage, and then income jumped significantly. Chart 4 shows the church's average monthly income from 2011 to 2015 for the first half of each year.

It should be noted that the church receives \$100 per month from Belmont Village for doing the services there. This money goes directly to Breckenridge Chapel.



Also, for the last two quarters the church has participated in the Kroger Community Rewards program. The church has received about sixty dollars during 2015 through this program.

Our treasurer, Kim Snead, and others have done a lot of work counting loose change. A rough estimate for this income is about twenty-five dollars or more per month.

#### 5. Media and Internet

There are several ways in which Breckenridge Chapel extends itself into the community through media and on the Internet. I enjoy being a part of "The Moral Side of the News" on WHAS11, WHAS AM840, and other radio stations. I am on the panel about twice every month. There are about 7,500 households



Fr. Tony Smith (far right) makes a point to other Moral Side of the News panelists (left to right): moderator John Blim, Dr. John Slider, Rev. Conrad Moorer, Rabbi Gaylia Rooks and Rev. Sally McClain

that watch every week. Add to that probably another 7,500 who listen on radio; and the same number for cable television. That means that every time I appear on the show, 22,500 households hear the phrase “Breckenridge Chapel, Free Methodist Church” twice.

There are some other websites that I manage that may be of interest to you. I have already mentioned Virtual Church; there is also ReStart (<http://www.ReStartFMC.com>), and Moral Side (<http://www.MoralSide.com>). We have a church website and a FaceBook page to which you may direct your friends (<http://www.BCFMC.com>). I also have a YouTube channel where I post videos of hymns, Free Methodist doctrine, and other church-related information. Based on the first six months, all of these Internet platforms will have about 45,000 page views in 2015.



## **6. Chaplaincy**

Lee Twombly and I are involved in chaplaincy for two communities in our area. Lee is a lot busier than I because he provides chaplaincy services for the Shively Fire and Police Departments. Lee is also involved in chaplaincy state-wide and trains other chaplains. I work with the St. Matthews Police Department.

## **7. Parsonage**

William and Tina moved into the parsonage in June and are getting settled. The parsonage is in good condition. The parsonage is William’s remuneration for being Youth Pastor and helping me with other ministries and responsibilities around the church as he continues in his exploration of ordained ministry. In addition to the youth ministry William shall immediately be helping me with the Belmont Village Preaching Point. He and Tina will be responsible for the upkeep of the parsonage and the utilities.

## **8. Church Facility**

Our church facility does need some work. The front and side steps need repair. The side door needs replacing. There is evidence of some leaks in the walls – especially in the basement – and these are going to be examined. We shall address these issues and others



as they occur. Be assured that nothing is about to collapse, but there are some items that need our attention.

We discovered late last year that the deeds for the two properties – parsonage and church facility – were not in the church’s name. The church facility was purchased in the 1950s;

and the parsonage in the 1960s. They were actually owned by the annual conference to which our church originally belonged – the Wabash (Indiana) Conference. There was a process of getting legal documents and signatures at long distance; but all of that was finally accomplished.

Earlier this year I went to have the deeds recorded in our name and was informed that it would cost us about \$145 to record both deeds. We were not able to do that at the time, and we have been waiting to get some extra funds to accomplish that.

## **9. Pastor**

Lillian and I are very happy with my appointment again to be your pastor for another conference year. We started officially on 1 July 2010. I have been a pastor since 1 January 1979, and I can truly say that you all are the most enjoyable congregation that I have ever served.

My transfer to the Free Methodist Church was not just a matter of convenience. I have found that this denomination has been a good fit for me in every way.

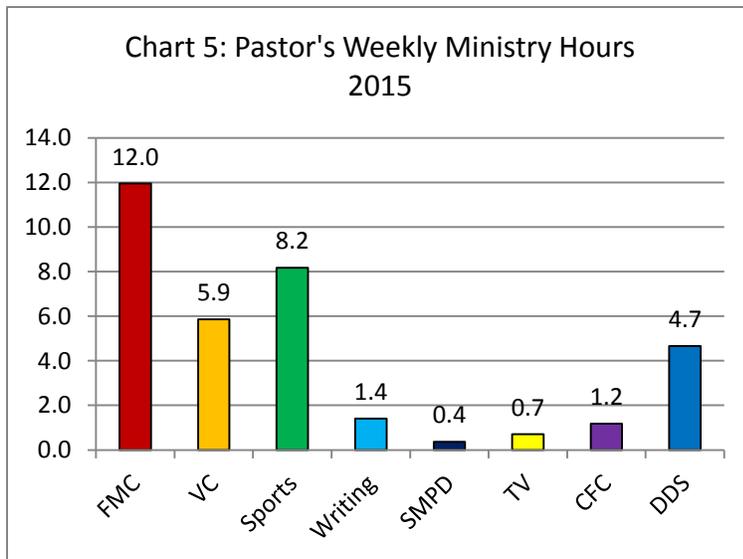
My family does appreciate the opportunity that you have given to our son William to serve here as he explores the ordained ministry. My father was never allowed to do with me that when we were both in the United Methodist ministry. As a matter of fact, I was not allowed to be appointed in the same county as he while he was active! The prospect of working with William has given me some new energy!

As most of you know, Lillian has Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and that limits her ability to be present with us on Sunday mornings. She does enjoy keeping in touch by telephone, putting flowers in the sanctuary on Saturdays, and getting to the worship at Belmont Village. One of the reasons that I retired from the United Methodist Church in 2010 was to devote more time to her, and we are able to do that here.

So what do Lillian and I do all week? Well, we do a lot of things together. I do the driving now; but we go to the grocery (senior day!), the fitness center about three times a week, and go to any medical appointments she has. We have a pretty simple but fun life.

I am accountable to the superintendent and bishop for what we all do together at Breckenridge Chapel; but I think it is appropriate that I give an accounting to you of my time.

I have told the story before of one experience I had at a previous church. I received a telephone call from a parishioner who said, "Well, I am glad I caught you. *You are never in the office!*"



It was not fifteen minutes later when I received another call from another parishioner who said, "Well, I see you are in the office. *You are always in the office!*"

It was at this church that I started keeping detailed records of my hours. All of the hours that I report here to you are in my view "ministry" of some sort. See Chart 5 for the details of my week.

For the first half of this year I have averaged twelve hours directly for Breckenridge Chapel. I include here any occasional denomination meeting or conference I attend and our Belmont Village ministry.

My next commitment is officiating sports. I average about eight hours per week in this activity that I call a hobby that pays well. I will start my eighteenth year of high school volleyball in August. This spring I finished my fifth year of high school girls' lacrosse. Last year I added indoor lacrosse and club volleyball. I will add field hockey this fall. I find it keeps me active and in touch with young people – like, for sure!

My sports commitments are seasonal. Indoor and outdoor lacrosse runs from November to May; volleyball (high school, club, and some college) goes from August to May; field hockey is from August to October. My activity peaks during the fall and spring high school seasons – mid-August through early November, and late February through early May. June and July are my "down times."

Combining "Virtual Church" and "Writing" I average almost 7.5 hours every week. These activities include managing my websites and writing books (every pastor thinks he is

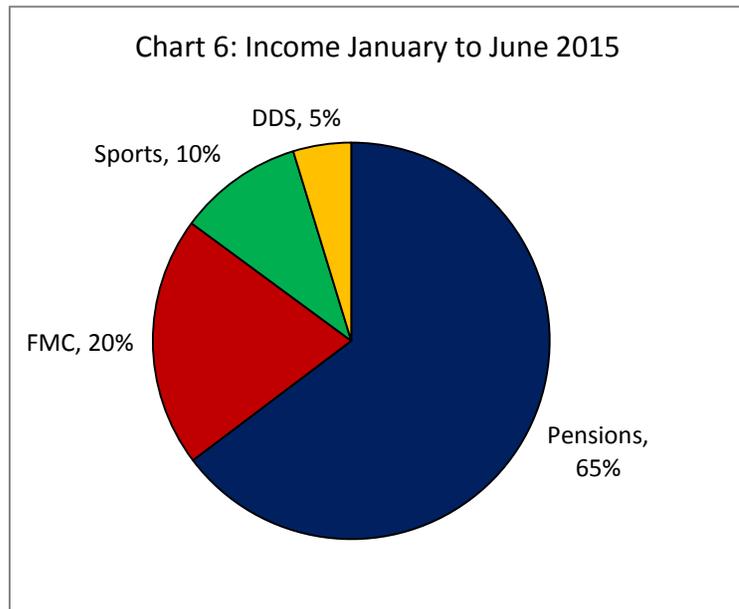
a writer). Police chaplaincy (SMPD), “Moral Side” (TV), and Crusade for Children (CFC) add about 2.5 hours every week. All of these activities I call hobbies that DO NOT pay at all!

I do one thing more. I job coach developmentally disabled young adults. I contract with the state through Developmental Disabilities Services and currently have six clients – all guys, ages eighteen to thirty. I spend almost five hours every week with this – about half of my time is actually spent with clients and half is filling out reports for the state!

All of these activities allow me to place my priority of time with Lillian and you all. I can either set my own appointments or block of days when I am not available. The only exception to this may be police chaplaincy, where I am called out at a moment’s notice; but that seems to be usually in the middle of the night!

So far this year I have averaged a little less than thirty-five hours per week of what I would call “ministry.” Lillian keeps reminding me that I am supposed to be retired! I remind her that there were churches and appointments where I was working seventy hours per week!

Just so you will know, Chart 6 shows our income sources for the first half of 2015. Most of our income comes from pensions of some sort. I have actually had three retirements – from the Marine Corps in 1996, from Jefferson County Schools (coaching) in 2007, and from the United Methodist Church in 2010. Our medical insurance is covered through our individual pension sources. We elected not to participate in the Free Methodist Church’s pension system, and that saves the congregation some money.



On 30 November 2015 I turn sixty-two and become eligible for Social Security. A little before that time I would like to discuss options that we (church and pastor) would have in restructuring the pastor’s salary package to save the church some more money and to look toward the future.

So, to conclude “Saint Matthews Free Methodist Church, Inc., d.b.a. Breckenridge Chapel” is doing well – by the grace of God and through your loving efforts. We are excelling and improving in the important spiritual things, and have just a few church building-related items that need some attention.

We have a unique niche in our community. I do not say this to disparage any other congregation, but if you were to look around our community you would find churches of different denominations, but of similar offerings – all about the same membership, attendance, budget, staff, programs, ministries, and worries!

I often tell people that we are the “Smallest Church in St. Matthews;” and we are. We should embrace that and know that we can truly function as a church family. I can “take roll” during the first verse of the first hymn. If you are sick or have a special need, the “senior” pastor will come and visit ... and your church friends will pray for you. Plus, we have no debt!

We certainly have room for more folks, so don’t be shy about inviting your friends. I know that they will find a wonderful church family who worship God, seek to share God’s love in Christ one person at a time, and enjoy one another’s fellowship.

Please remember our church family’s purpose that you see at the beginning of each worship service:

1. To introduce others to Jesus in positive ways.
2. To help others grow in following Jesus.
3. To relieve suffering in our community and world.
4. To model healthy and godly families, marriages, and relationships.

Thanks again for the opportunity to be a part of this church family and to serve God and you here. I look forward to our future together.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. De". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small plus sign (+) written below the first letter of the last name.