

## **My Memories of South Apalachin Baptist Church** by Kelly Strope

One of my younger memories in the new church was when we **burned the mortgage** on the new building. I remember Pastor Walter asking my uncle Bob Strope and Albert Welch to come up front that Sunday morning. These two men did a lot of work on building the church. They had an old offering plate and they placed the mortgage in the plate and set it on fire. I remember thinking "I can't believe they are using matches and **MAKING A FIRE IN CHURCH!!! - ON PURPOSE!!**" As a young person that made more of an impression on me than the significance of what was actually happening!

**Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade** was a big part of our lives growing up. I can't tell you much about **Boys Brigade** because I'm not a boy and didn't attend, but I do have three older brothers who did. I remember their pine wood derby's in their "Stockade" days and their working on their cars to get them to be the lightest, prettiest and most importantly the fastest!! We would come as families to watch their races and cheer them on, hoping "our boy" would be the winner. Each race was cheered as if it was the Champion Race and each boy was praised for the work on his car. I also remember my brothers going on campouts with the men - especially in the "Battalion" years. They would go for a long week end to Long Lake and the stories and pictures that would come back - sometimes it seemed a miracle they lived to tell their tales!

Now, **Pioneer Girls** I have stories to tell! It was a program that girls attended from grades 3-12 (like Boys Brigade was for the boys). We had Pilgrims I (grades 3 and 4) and II (grades 5-6), Colonists (grades 7-8) and Explorers (grades 9-12). I remember our meetings ... We had "Catch Up" where we would line up ... two girls would be at the head of each group and they were in charge of attendance and collecting offering. We would say the key verse Psalm 119:105 "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." We would either work on a badge or have a craft; we would have music, games and a Bible lesson. I remember Glenna Storozow (Hall now) and I would compete with each other to see who got the most badges. We both got them all until Explorers when the program changed. We would go on hikes looking for leaves to preserve, we would have fire building evenings where our leaders showed us how to build a fire and then we had to build our own, we would bake and cook, sing, help Elmer and Harriet Storozow clean the church, help Myrtle Stone in the nursery - all these activities and many more like them would help us to earn our badges. We learned many life skills while doing them, both physical and spiritual.

Some of the fun memories that came to mind was hiking up to the Stephens Cabin on the hill behind their house and spending the night. All us girls "slept" (not hardly)

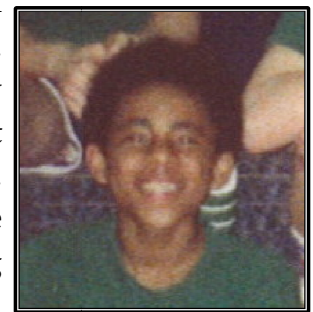
upstairs and the leaders slept downstairs. We were up almost all night talking, laughing and telling stories until about 5:00 *am* when Mrs. Cathy Guiles stuck her head up the stairs and told us we had better get "SOME sleep" or our parents wouldn't let us come again.

We went to Mrs. Myrtle Stone's house to practice our skit on Esther and Mordecai and how Esther saved her people. We laughed and joked but Mrs. Stone made sure we learned our lines too. I remember Peggy Wilkins (Crane) was Mordecai and I was the narrator.

We also had a slumber party at Grammy Andreasen's house up on South Apalachin Road. There were probably 10 or so girls. We took a picture of us all on her couch - as many as would fit sitting on it and then 1 or 2 lying across our laps. I remember Grammy Andreasen slept in her own bed and Mrs. Stone laying down on the floor across the arch way to the living room. She said she was going to "be the shepherd guarding her flock of sheep and keeping us safe during the night." Looking back I think she was also there to make sure we didn't go outside during the night!

When we were in Colonist's, there were a lot of the older young people getting married; Jim and Lois Strobe, Bruce and Bonnie Lillie, Carl and Carolyn Andreasen are a few that come to mind. The Ladies Missionary would make a crazy quilt for each couple that got married and there were so many for a couple of years, they couldn't keep up. They asked Mrs. Glenda Bridges and Mrs. Helen Barnhart (our leaders who we called the Mrs. B's) if we would be able to help with the blocks. Our leaders taught us the fancy stitching the ladies did in red thread and we worked on blocks at our Pioneer Girls meetings for months. I also went next door to my Grandma Strobe's house and helped her with blocks and she showed me other stitches to do on the blocks besides. There were railroad ties and rooster claws to name a couple.

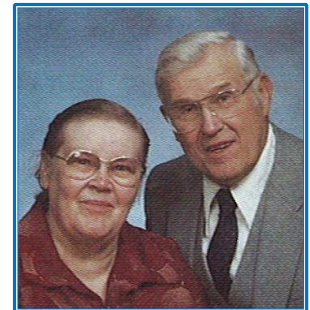
When we were in Explorers, the whole Pioneer Girls program changed. We didn't earn badges anymore and it was different. One memory of our Explorer years was when the Crane family adopted Philip. He was five or six (I think) and for his first birthday here we girls decided to have a birthday party for him. Cathy Crane (Card) was a member of our group and she gave us ideas of what he needed/liked. We had so much fun shopping for him, then wrapping everything up and baking a cake - it was a blast. He was the center of attention and ate it up! He asked us the next year if we were going to have another party for him!



An important part of the Pioneer Girls Program was the Pal/Gal Program. This program paired each girl with a woman in the church, who befriended her and did things with her, helped her earn badges, etc. Even though we stopped having Pioneer Girls at the church, we still continue the Pal/Gal Program to this day with women and girls opening their hearts and lives to each other, learning from each other, sharing our faith and having fun together.

The best parts of both Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade were the leaders, the men and women of this church who gave of their time and lives to share and teach the young girls and boys in this church to love and serve the Lord. Some of the leaders were Art and Marie Andreasen, Glenn and Helen Barnhart, Glenda Bridges, Doug and Maxine Strobe, Bill Hall, Pat and Harrison Forde, Grover and Myrtle Stone to name a few. Many of the young men and women I grew up with are now serving in places of leadership and ministering for the Lord, not only in South Apalachin but where ever the Lord has taken them in their lives - some in areas of full time ministry as missionaries and pastors. We learned much about faithfulness, loving the Lord and His people and how to serve Him no matter where we are.

I remember one Mother's Day the church celebrated Myrtle Stone's years of working in the toddler nursery. Due to a back problem, she couldn't sit for the Service and so faithfully served the young ones every Sunday morning. The church had a special plate made to commemorate her (at that time) over 30 years of serving the Lord and her church family by having the Toddler Nursery. Everyone who had been under her ministry went up front - we filled the platform and across the front of the church. She touched so many young lives through the years. I remember helping out as a teen with the little ones and her smiling face and the love she had for each one. The many songs she would teach ... "Only a Boy Named David" ... "Climb, Climb Up Sunshine Mountain" ... "I'm in the Lords Army" ... "Deep and Wide" ... "The B-i-b-l-e" ... "The B-l-o-o-d" and many more and how we loved doing the motions that went with each.



Another important aspect of my years at SABC is **Music**. We couldn't join the choir until we were 12 years old. Mr. Bridges was my first choir director - we went from his ministry in Junior Church to being under his guidance and leadership in the Choir. We couldn't wait until we turned 12 to be a part of the choir. Mary Hall (Johnson), Joy Barnhart (Simms), Glenna Storozow (Hall) and I joined about the same time and we all would sit in the short front row of the choir loft right in front of Mr. Bridges. Some of the other choir directors we had were Glenn Barnhart, Duane Sunderland and Ed Swackhammer. I remember Duane used a plastic baton to direct and one practice he

got so excited the baton flew out of his hand into the soprano section. Fortunately no one was hurt. I loved to sing for Sunday mornings and the Christmas and Easter Cantata's. I remember Sunday night Singspirations - people from other churches would come and we would have an evening of music; singing hymns, choruses, special music - it was wonderful to hear voices raised in worship and afterwards going down to the fellowship hall for a time of refreshment and fellowship. Ice cream rolls with chocolate syrup and strawberries were usually the dessert and it was always soooo good!! Down through the years, I've sang in the Ladies Ensemble, sang solos, duets and with other small groups and today I help the Music Ministry by putting the words on the screen and running the computer during services. Music has been and will be a big part of my memories and ministry at SABC.

One of my **saddest memories of Choir** was my sophomore year of high school. We were at the church practicing for the Easter Cantata. It was March 15 and a Sunday afternoon. The phone rang and it was for Karen Mikalonis. Her son, Mark and Rick Miles had been snowmobiling at Mikalonis' while we were at practice. Rick had stopped his snowmobile, climbed off, grabbed his head and collapsed. An ambulance was called and choir practiced stopped as we all prayed for Rick, not knowing what was wrong. He'd had a brain aneurism that burst and died two days later on my birthday. I remember our whole youth group got permission to leave school to attend his funeral. It hit us all hard - we were 9-12 graders and at that age felt invincible and one of our friends was dead. We knew he was with the Lord and that comforted us a great deal, but it was a real wake up call for our Youth Group - we never know when God will call us Home and we need to use the time we have wisely. Our youth leaders helped us make a cross podium, still in use in the gym, in memory of Rick.

Another important memory for me was when **I was baptized**. I don't remember exactly how old I was, about 13 or 14 maybe. Pastor Walter said if there were any who wanted to be baptized we should talk to him. Usually baptisms took place during the evening service. There were 14 of us getting baptized that day so the baptisms were the whole morning service. My brother, Jim was baptized the same day as I was and I remember we went together to meet with Pastor Walter and the Deacons to tell them why we wanted to be baptized and shared our professions of faith. Baptism services are always special because one makes a public confession of faith in Jesus and a step in obedience in following the Lord.

As we approach our 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a church, I remember celebrating the **200th Anniversary of our Country**. We had a big picnic, everyone brought a dish to pass and we had chicken barbeque (some things don't change) and a lot of people wore colonial style outfits, Aunt Mary Rider wore her wedding dress (she still fit in it probably 80

years or so after her wedding day!!!). We had a big tent where the gym stands today. We played softball, had relay races and the day concluded with a special cantata called *Let Freedom Ring*.

I have s-o-o-o-o many memories of **Youth Group** here at SABC. We had a huge group of young people and we were/are friends. We did so much together I hardly know where to start.

My youth group consisted of David Andreasen; Gwen, Joy and Bruce Barnhart; Rodney Belknap; Nancy Benthin; Cary and Melanie Brown; Shawn and Hubble Corbett; Andrew, Cathy, Dan, David and Jim Crane; Carol and Cathy Forde; Bill and Mary Hall; Carol and Jerry Holden; Mark and Wendy Mikalonis; Rick, Cindy and Vern Miles; Helen O'Connell; Denny, Craig, Harold, Dale, Colleen and Corrine Palmer; Carol Race; Andrew Roberts; Russell and Glenna Storozow; Robin, Marla and Kelly Strobe; Jeff VanGorden; Denise and Jimmy Walter; Shelly Walter; Peggy and Wendy Wilkins; and Beth and David Wilkinson. Our leaders were Jim and Lorraine Costley and Doug and Maxine Strobe. I am probably forgetting someone and I apologize for that.

Our weekly meetings consisted of starting in the auditorium with music, led by a youth song leader and the piano played by one of the girls. We had announcements made by our President and/or Vice President, the Treasurer collected offering and the Secretary took care of any business he or she may have had. Then we went to the rooms in the back - where the sound and computer systems are now - and had our Bible lesson. Sometimes one of the youth would have pre-pared the lesson, with a leader's help. Our leaders would be there to guide us, but we took a lot of responsibility in planning and executing our meetings and activities. We had good guidance and practice being put in places of leadership that have stood us well through our lives.

We were involved in Word of Life Programs part of the time ... Ray Namie was the Word of Life Area Rep and he and his wife, Leslie, and their boys attended here. Different ones in the Youth Group would go and help Ray run the Basketball, Bowling and Volleyball Marathons he was in charge of. It was due to his influence that we were involved in so many Word of Life events. He left here and went to Word of Life Bible Institute to be the Dean of Men.

Some of the activities that stand out ... We would go to **Barnhart's after church** on Sunday nights (especially in the summer) and swim in their pond and the girls would make homemade pizza. In the winter we would play table games and have popcorn.

We would go to **the Ranch** (now Mapleridge Ranch) and have trail rides, hay rides, bonfires and play Sardines in the bunk house.

When there was a 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday in the month, we would go to **The Mission** in Binghamton and have a service, we would do music, sometimes a skit, have a speaker - usually a youth; after we were done, we would visit with the guys and on the way home we would stop for an ice cream.

We would go to **YFC (Youth For Christ)** on Fridays in Binghamton. It was fun to meet with young people from around the Triple Cities from various churches, sing songs, have Bible lessons and once a month we would have quizzing. We had a quiz team of 5 or 6 people and we would study the chapter or book of the Bible that had been assigned as the next quiz topic. We would meet together at church and have our own quiz questions and practice and then compete with other churches - we usually were able to hold our own - Joy Barnhart, Glenna Storozow, Mary Johnson, Andrew Roberts, Helen O'Connell, and Robin and Kelly Strobe participated as members of our team.

One year a **surprise birthday party** was held at Holden's for those young people who had birthdays in March - it seemed it was half of the youth group! We played games, had cake and the girls were given roses and the guys a pen as a gift.

We often would pick up the phone on a Friday or Saturday and call each other to see what we wanted to do instead of staying home. We might go to the Barnhart's and swim, to the church and play games (either the old or new gym) we could play basketball - a game or PIG or HORSE, we might play volleyball or do games like WinkUm or Poisonous Bales or Chairs; we might go bowling, play miniature golf, get a pizza or ice cream. It didn't matter what we did as long as we were together.

Some of our annual events were ... **Volleyball and Basketball Tournament in Horseheads, NY** - Each year between Christmas and New Year's the Southern Baptist Conference held a Volleyball and Basketball Tournament. The girls played volleyball and the boy's basketball. We had the old gym at that time and there was a three foot clearance from the ceiling to the top of the net. The girls all developed serves that would clear the net and drop. The boys would play basketball every chance they had. We would always come home with trophies - Volleyball always first, Basketball always first and usually 2<sup>nd</sup> as well - we would take two teams. They stopped asking us to come - *they said* it was because we weren't a Southern Baptist Church - *we know* it was because we took home too many trophies!!!

**Snow Camp** - we went to Word of Life Snow Camp usually in February and the boys competed in the basketball tournament and the girls played volleyball, we would go tubing, snowmobiling, play ping pong - usually "Round Robin" and had a blast. The music and excitement of the Word of Lifers' was so contagious and we would come home all pumped up for the Lord. The year I was a student at Word of Life, we made Chilly Willy for the ice sculpting contest and won 1<sup>st</sup> place. It made it in our year book!

Word of Life hosted a **Banquet in Niagara Falls** each spring. It was to honor the Seniors who ate dinner in the revolving restaurant overlooking the Falls, and the underclassmen had dinner in one of the hotel banquet rooms. We would go up on Friday's after school, and crossing the border into Canada was always tense. You never knew what questions they would ask (and hopefully no one gave a smart answer that would cause trouble!) We spent the night in the hotel, had Saturday to do stuff on the Canadian side of the Falls - the Maid of the Mist, the tunnels under the falls (Robin Strobe lost the watch she had gotten for her birthday there one year), Ripley's Believe It Or Not Museum, the Wax Museum and walking the gardens across the street from the hotels where we always took a group picture all dressed up in our finery and Sunday we headed for home. Each year it alternated who would have the falls side of the hotel overlooking the gardens and the falls, one year it was the boys and the next year the girls. The off year the scenery was the parking lot!

**Senior Banquets** - each year we would (and still do) honor our graduating seniors with a Senior Banquet. The seniors would decide on the theme that they wanted and the underclassmen would then decorate the Fellowship Hall and help with the food preparation. We would dress up, have special music, a special speaker and do some activities after the banquet - whatever the Seniors wanted - have you ever bowled or played miniature golf in a long dress?

**Campouts** - each summer we would go on our Senior Campout. The leaders would make arrangements for the sites at whatever camp ground we were going to that year. We would go on Friday afternoon, set up our tents and come home Sunday after lunch. In between we would swim, raft or tube, play volleyball, softball, basketball and table games (especially if it rained - and if we were on a campout it rained at least part of the time!!). We took turns preparing our meals and doing clean up - guys as well as girls - we took pictures of the guys doing dishes to prove to their Moms they knew how! We would have a bonfire every night, sing songs, have S'mores and a short devotional - either by a leader or one of the youth. On Sunday we would have our own service, we would go around to the campsites closest to us asking them to join us and then we would sing songs, choruses, hymns, songs we sang in youth group; and then one of our leaders would have a short devotional. After lunch, we would pack up and head home.

**Sports - Basketball** was a big part of SABC from the mid 70's to the present... some of the guys still play on Saturday mornings, but they aren't as young as they used to be! We had the little guy's league that played Saturday Mornings. These were 10-14 year olds that didn't play in a school sport and it was a league for these boys to learn the basics and have some fun. Jim Dodge and Gary Slater were the coaches and I kept score for them. It was so much fun to watch them learn and improve over a season. Jim allowed Darren, his youngest son, to play with the team when he was eight - he was pretty good and I won't ever forget his cheering "Arrest that man!" instead of "Harass that man"!

**Basketball** - We also had a men's league, I started keeping score for it when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade (I learned how to do that in my gym class that year). I remember traveling to Newark Valley and Ross Corners and many other churches to play until we built our gym in 1978. Then the league held all the games here on Thursday and Friday nights. There were usually two games a night, an early and late game. We had three teams in the league at one time for two to three years, but usually two most years. We had our white team, red team and the third team was the green team. I kept score for all three and when our teams played each other I was the only book and sometimes ran the clock too! I learned to keep my eyes open and my mouth shut because if I was talking, I always missed something!

**Softball** is another sport played and enjoyed by men and women alike. We have had Men's and Women's teams down through the years and it's always fun to either come and play **or** watch the games and cheer our team on. I remember we had a Women's game when we were in high school - we were playing at Berean Baptist. I had my license, was driving a VW Bug and I think I had about 8 players packed into it. One of the girls *knew* where the church was - we ended up in Binghamton instead of Endwell - but we knew they couldn't play without us as we were all together and made up most of the team! We finally made it to the right place.

**Volleyball** is another sport we have enjoyed through the years. I already mentioned the Horseheads' Tournament, but we also went to a tournament in Greene with the teens when I was a leader. We would practice for months a couple of times a week, working on serves, digs, spikes, and multiple hits. I don't remember us ever placing first, but we had 2<sup>nd</sup> a couple of times. We also had nights during the winter months where anyone in the Church who wanted, could come to the gym and play - at times we had two nets and one or two teams waiting to play and others times we barely had enough to field two teams but always a lot of fun, laughter and exercise.



Another big area of our church is **Missions**. SABC has ALWAYS had a heart for missions. We would have missionary appointees come and candidate on Sunday nights and our missionaries that we supported come to speak and share what was happening on their respective fields when they came home for furlough as we do today.

We also **supported many of our own** that went into missions - both short and long term. I often think about my youth group and how many of them went to the mission field.

David Andreasen did a short term trip to Italy; Bruce and Karen Barnhart were missionaries to Russia; Mark and Joy (Barnhart) Simms are currently missionaries to France and Africa; Dan and Deb (Bulkeley) went to Thailand; Dan and Peggy (Wilkins) Crane went to Paraguay and now Dan is our Pastor!; Robin Strobe did a short term trip to China and now she and her husband, John Coules are currently missionaries in France; Kelly Strobe went to Germany for one year; Jim and Sue (Welch) Whittaker were youth workers in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Mike Welch went to Alaska. Many men and women from the church have gone on short mission's trips as well - to St. Thomas, Russia, Haiti, Alaska and Paraguay.

We went on many **Mission trips with the Youth Group** over the years; .... to Jim and Sue Whittaker's at Yankee Youth Center in New Castle, PA and at their camp in Virginia. When we went to New Castle the first time, I remember we had just gotten a new van (at least new to us). My opportunity to drive came at dusk and we hit construction with the cement dividers on both sides. I will never forget the play in the steering wheel of that van and how tense I was! Also on that trip Jim Dodge threw his back out - so I was the sole leader to drive home! He hurt so bad he asked if I was trying to hit the potholes - poor guy! We also went to the Ranch on many spring breaks and worked on the paint ball fields and bases for tents for their overnight and adventure weeks. We went to Ohio and created boxes around trees and flowers and put in mulch to pretty up the curbs of a neighborhood and held a block party. We worked hard on each of these trips to help serve others, but we also had fun and always had a sense of accomplishment that we completed the tasks we set out to do. We usually did more than the people expected us to get done, but we knew we were helping others and serving the Lord.

Others from our Church went into Missions as well - Mark Misoullich went to Africa until he was too sick to stay, Gary and Penny Whipple are in Peru doing church planting; Ray and Phyllis Jones ran the Mission for many years; Dale and Opal (Chaffee) Linebaugh were at El Rancho de Paz, Miracle Mountain and Practical Bible Training School (now Davis College); Duane Blasdel was a Youth Pastor in Florida and

is now at El Rancho de Paz (now Mapleridge Ranch); Jake Blasdel was at the Ranch and now with CCO; Steve and Marianne Crandall went from being an associate pastor to church planting in upstate New York as did Steve and Sue Clark, while Dan and Betsy Delavan went to the state of Maine.

The last couple of names take me to the Youth and Associate Pastors that Pastor Walter would mentor. Most of these men came to us from Practical Bible Training School (now Davis College) although some went right from the pews where they sat growing up to the pulpit (via a Christian College as well). We had Steve Clark, Dan Delavan, Steve Seely, Steve Crandall, Larry Jennings, Stan Baker, Sal Maiorana, Dave Andreasen, Dan Crane and David Titus (who was the oldest Associate Pastor we had). Most of these men went on into their own pastorate, missions or other areas of ministry.

We also had a couple of **Ordination Councils** ... a youth pastor and a pastor ... Pastor Sal Maiorana and Pastor Michael Jayne. Pastor Sal's was the first one I had attended and I was asked to take the notes. I had no idea what to expect and was afraid I wouldn't get something that was important. I was surprised at how tough the questions that were asked, not sure why! It was amazing to watch and listen as these men explained their faith and answered questions that I wouldn't have thought to ask, let alone know how to begin to answer!

God certainly has blessed South Apalachin with godly, knowledgeable men to fill the pulpit, most of whom were graduates from Practical Bible Training School - now Davis College. Yes there have been problems over the years, but we are all human and none perfect. God isn't finished with any of us yet - we are still works in progress!

After I graduated from high school, I went to Word of Life Bible Institute with Bill and Glenna (Storozow at the time) Hall, Elaine (Holden) Maxim and Dana Towle - with the year before Dave Andreasen, Joy (Barnhart) Simms and Mary (Hall) Johnson going. It was only a one year program at the time and Ray Namie was there his first year as Dean of Men. It was nice to have the Namies there as a reminder of home for us and to go to their home when we had some free time. It was hard to remember to call him Mr. Namie instead of Ray, which we had called him for six years. I remember a hayride in the fall ... we had a couple of wagons, Ray and Les were on one with baby Timmy and I had Stephen and John with me on another one. We stopped at their home to let them off and the boys wanted to ride to the end and have me walk them home. I called out "Hey, Ray, can the boys finish up and I will walk them home?" "Sure" he answered. I didn't think anything about it until I turned back to the wagon and one of the guys was looking at me funny. "What's the matter," I asked. "You called Mr. Namie by his first

name - you are s-o-o-o-o going to get demerits!!" I hadn't realized what I had said and neither did Ray - no demerits were ever given - at least for that!

When I returned home from Word of Life, I became a Youth Leader with Jim and Linda Dodge and have worked with the Youth Group since that time (over 30 years) except when I was on deputation to go to Germany. I also was a Pioneer Girl Leader with the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades, taught Sunday School and was the AWANA secretary when we switched to that. It's easy to be involved in so much when you're 19!

Now the shoe was on the other foot, instead of learning from my leaders, I was a leader helping others learn - not always the easiest of things to do. My areas of contribution were and are more administrative and organizational rather than doing teaching.

As a youth leader I realized how much time and effort my leaders gave to me and my youth group - it's not just an hour or so on Sunday night. There's the planning of what we are going to study, what activities we want to do, organizing and making arrangements to bring them about - especially a lockdown! Having five or six other churches join you with 50 to 60 young people for at least 12 hours of all night fun is a lot of work ... prayer, organizing, prayer, deciding what games and activities to do and getting all the supplies needed to do them, prayer, getting others in the church to help, prayer, food, prayer, special music and speakers, prayer, you get the picture ... did I mention prayer!??

We had a **Young Adults Sunday School Class** - it consisted of College and Career, Singles and Young Married. We met in the Fireplace Room in the gym, which wasn't finished at that time. We would take up two offerings each Sunday - one was our Sunday School offering and one we were saving to finish off the room. We bought paneling and carpet and the guys in our class put them in. We also started to meet one Sunday a month and have dinner together. We wanted a time to fellowship with each other to keep up with what was going on in our lives outside of church. We all brought a dish and after church we stayed, had lunch and fellowship. After some months of doing this on our own, we thought to ask the other adult Sunday School classes one at a time to join us. This was so well received by everyone that we started having the second Sunday of the month Family Fellowship Dinners!

I had been asked to be on the **Missions Conference Committee** in the early 90's. I remember we began and ended each planning meeting with prayer that God would use this Missions Conference to reach someone in our congregation for missions. At the conference that year we had Grover DeVault, the north-east area representative for Overseas Christian Servicemen Centers (OCSC). He was sharing some needs of their

mission, one of which was an Administrative Assistant for the Europe field. As he was describing the responsibilities, I kept saying "I could do that." I never dreamed I would be the one to go from that Missions Conference when we were praying and planning, I was thinking it would be one of the teens! But God had other plans and I went to Germany for one year with OCSC - who's name changed to Cadence International. Before I went, the people of this church made a quilt and a photo album/sharing memories book for me to take. I read that book many times and wrapped up in that quilt when I was homesick! I remember the night of the Missions Conference the year I was in Germany; the church said they were going to call me during the conference. There is a six hour time difference and I set my alarm to get up at two a.m. to take the call. I sat on my couch wrapped in the quilt everyone had made listening to the choir sing "All Who Come Behind Us" and feeling a part of the service even though I was clear across the ocean!

I had the honor and privilege to work with many other youth leaders down through the years, Jim and Linda Dodge as mentioned previously, Donna Storozow, Doug and Christine (Curran) Wilkins, Pastor Sal and Deana Maiorana, Andrew and Nancy Crane, Gary and Sue Slater, Darren and Colleen Dodge, Jeremiah and Nicole Fernley, Andy and Emily Nelson, Donny and Brita (Johnson) Terry before and after they were married, Paul and Becky DePriest.

We do many of the same activities as when I was in Youth Group but a new one is **Creative Ministries**. We go to Mansfield, PA, leaving early Saturday morning. We spend a couple of hours in the morning working on skits and music and then have lunch. The afternoon is more of the same and we have dinner. After dinner we do a couple of dry runs putting the whole program together and have a final dress rehearsal. We then do the program Sunday Morning at the Covington Church and then we came to SABC for the evening service. This year we will be doing the program three times, but not at SABC. It is amazing to watch the youth first get to know each other and then their parts and see how they progress to near perfection on Sunday. Saturday morning you'd think they would never get there, but God has always been good and it has been a blessing to all.

It was a little strange at first to be working with Darren Dodge as a fellow youth leader especially when I realized he was a toddler when I first started as a leader AND I used to baby sit him and his four siblings! But it is amazing to see how God has worked in his life through the years as a young boy, a teen, a college student, married, a dad to five beautiful girls and now he is a leader of our church as a Deacon and a Youth Leader. But that is what SABC is... people being used of God to teach those younger to love and serve the Lord and then those younger ones growing up and teaching the ones

who come next. We have done this through the years with programs like Pioneer Girls and Boys Brigade, AWANA, Kids Klub, Youth Group, the Pal/Gal Program, the MoJo Program, the Heart-to-Heart Program, Apples of Gold - we have always reached out to those younger and older - learning, teaching, sharing what God is doing in our lives and I think this makes our Church Family so special ... we are never too young or too old to learn from each other.

Another important part of SABC is **El Rancho de Paz** or **Mapleridge Ranch** as it now is called. SABC has been a part of the Ranch ministry and the Ranch a part of SABC almost since the Ranch's conception. Our young people down through the years have gone to the Ranch as campers, to work as summer staff and also help on weekends in fall, winter and spring - the Ranch was/is like a 2<sup>nd</sup> home to many of our young people. We have used the Ranch for youth retreats, Sunday School Picnics and much more! We have gone to work days at the Ranch, cleaned all the dishes in the kitchen before the summer camp session started, sewed curtains for the windows, helped with the pool, built cabins, and given financial support. A lot of the directors down through the years attended SABC as their home church. We have men and women serving on the Ranch Board. We have been richly blessed by the ministry of the Ranch. Our young people have learned many life changing lessons under the Ranch's ministry, lessons that they brought back and shared in the ministry here at SABC. God has richly blessed both ministries as they reach out to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus and teach young people to grow in service and love to their Lord.

50 years of memories condensed to these few pages (I never thought I would be old enough to say that!!) ... God has been good to us here at SABC through the years as we endeavor to serve Him and be faithful in what He has called us to do. May we continue to be faithful until He comes!