

Bear Creek UMC Library History



Bear Creek United Methodist Church was formed in 1977. In 1988, member Val Reissig and other volunteers decided that we needed a church library. The old choir room was available, bookcases and books were donated, and we had a library. During her term as librarian, Val had permanent bookshelves and two corner display cases added.

Originally the library used a church classification system that organized items by subject with letter designations such as P for Prayer. There were approximately 2,400 books by 1991. Janice Wood and Henry Van Dyke were also involved in setting up the library. Thanks to Henry, the library became active in the Houston Area Chapter of the Church and Synagogue Library Association (CSLA-HAC). This organization provides training seminars and other advice to non-professional librarians supporting religious focused libraries.

Henry was not only the librarian after Val left, but also was a presenter at CSLA-HAC meetings. After Henry's death, Barbara Cochran became our new librarian. She was able to procure more bookshelves to finish up more walls and an office armoire for a workstation. She did the initial research and recommended as she left that we convert to the Dewey Decimal System.

In 2003, Amber Woodman became the church librarian. She and her committee spent the first year converting the library to the Dewey Decimal System and creating a basic computer inventory. With an enthusiastic committee, workdays every Thursday and one Saturday a month, and generous patrons who donate to and use our library, the library continued to thrive. We all work hard to fulfill the stated mission of the library: to maintain the library and its contents as a resource for church members and staff to help them grow spiritually and personally, to promote its use, and increase literacy in the community.

In 2010 the library obtained a commercial library software system called Concourse. One of the benefits of Concourse is that the catalog is available online for searches. Also, in 2010 the last of the empty wall



Val Reissig in the Library 1988



Today - note the window to the left is in the first picture

space was filled with bookshelves. In 2011 the library had grown to approximately 7400 books with an annual circulation of more than 4800. In 2019, feeling that Concourse provided some operational limitations, the library upgraded to Atrium. In 2021 we have almost 10,000 books in the catalog.

The library is still heavily donation driven, both books and monetary donations. Donated books are screened by the Librarian to determine if they are in good condition and fall within the scope of our Mission Statement. Rejected books are sold to Half Price Books, donated to other churches, donated to Goodwill, or recycled with any proceeds used to buy more books.

Monetary donations may be for the purchase of specific books and these books will carry a book plate designating donation in "Honor of" some person or group or in "Memory of" a person. The Library is committed to honoring all such requests.

United Methodist Women (WMW) have a national reading program list to encourage women to read books that discuss current social and spiritual topics. Our local UMW group makes donations to the library to obtain books from that list and have them in the Library.

In the summers since 2006, the library has sponsored two reading programs: one for toddlers through kindergarteners and another for youngsters in first through sixth grade. The younger children enjoy a weekly story time. Reading incentives prizes are awarded to all ages. In 2016 over 60 children participated and in 2019 104 participated. In 2020 we provided a video story time and in 2021 we had a limited in-person program that was also shown on video.

Following Hurricane Harvey our library heard about Pop-Up libraries being implemented by Harris County Public Library. In 2017 and 2018 we provided space on our campus for them to provide internet connected computers and several hundred books one day a week. They also conducted a story time and ESL classes.

When CSLA discontinued operation, local congregations responded by forming the Houston Area Congregational Library Association (HACLA). We belong and support them in their goal of training and supporting non-professional librarians. In October 2021 we are hosting their next meeting.

The Library is guided by a committee composed of the Librarian and the individuals who volunteer to work in the Library. While COVID-19 has limited our library activities, we look forward to reviving our regular workdays on Thursdays and the second Saturday morning of each month. August 2021

