

## First United Methodist Church of Mesa

### Description of physical appearance

The most prominent feature of the brick traditional style church sanctuary building is the high steeple. A majestic two story north entrance includes carved wood doors. Stained glass windows enhance the sanctuary. A chapel is also located within the structure. East of that building is a landscaped patio encircled by an L-shaped addition which includes classrooms, offices, an assembly room, and a large activity center.

### Statement of significance for Criterion A (associated with events, activities, or developments that were important in the past)

In existence since the late 1800's, the church campus is the oldest one still in continuous use in Mesa. The city and Methodism have marched forward together since the early days of the late 1800's. When the original Mormon settlers were founding Mesa, steps were being taken to organize a Methodist congregation. The person behind it was Dr. E. W. Wilbur, a medical doctor who had moved to Mesa so that his family's health might improve. Meeting places were scarce in those pioneer days of the early 1890's so the Wilbur family made their spacious barn available. It was located at the intersection of Stapley and Main Street.



Dr. Wilbur's barn

In 1893, Dr. Wilbur acquired two parcels of land between First Avenue and Second Avenue east of Center Street when a debtor defaulted on a loan. He then presented it to the congregation so a church could be built. The first permanent church in Mesa, the 1893 Methodist Episcopal Church building, was a one room brick structure with a peaked wood shingled roof. The entrance foyer faced west with gothic style windows on each side of it. Stained glass windows were featured on the north and south sides. The Reverend Fred Sheldo of the Tempe First Methodist Episcopal Church was also the pastor for this new congregation until 1899 when Reverend Edwin G. Decker was appointed to serve at the church.



1893 Church

By 1913, it was determined that a larger church was needed so a new structure was built on the site at that time. Some of the building materials were recycled from the first church, and members of the congregation hauled sand and gravel from the Salt River bed for the concrete mix. While the building was under construction, the church members met on the second floor of the Barnett Building on Main Street which was also used at that time as a Masonic Hall. The bell tower from the 1913 church is now part of a recently built columbarium.



The Methodist church was active within the community and sponsored Mesa's first Boy Scout Troop, Number 1. It was organized in 1922 by Reverend W.C. Miller, the church pastor. Later the troop number was changed to 51. It is now Troop 451. The boys were in the second Boy Scout Council in Arizona.

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The 1913 church served the needs of the congregation until World War II when, despite wartime shortages of material and labor, the church was extensively remodeled. That was barely completed when it became evident that more work would be needed because Mesa's population and that of the church were booming. On January 4, 1945, the church's name was changed from First Episcopal Methodist Church of Mesa to First Methodist Church of Mesa.

By 1947, plans were made to build an entirely new large church, but additional land was needed. In 1951, John Dobson purchased the corner property west of the 1913 church which extended to the corner of Center Street and First Avenue southward along Center Street to Second Avenue. He then gave this land to the church as a memorial gift from the Dobson family. At that time, the property was valued at more than \$56,000.

Martin Ray Young, Jr., AIA, who was a descendant of Brigham Young, was chosen as the architect for the new church. In 1948, he was the first architect to establish his practice in Mesa and was the architect for many buildings in the state as illustrated in his book, "The Work of Martin Ray Young, Jr. Architect, Mesa, Arizona." The First Methodist Church is pictured in the publication.

The groundbreaking for the new church was on February 2, 1951. Construction went at a slow pace at first with the speed determined by the availability of funds. The steeple was built first and stood by itself for some time. Then the steel frame of the main portion of the sanctuary was constructed, but the building was not completed until more than three and a half years later. It included the 120 foot tall steeple and sanctuary with pews for 550 people, a balcony for 125, a choir room, robe room, several classrooms, and an upper floor on the south end of the sanctuary. The Stewart Chapel was also a part of the construction. Even though the church structure was not quite completed, the congregation began meeting in it in October of 1954. On February 2, 1958, when there was no longer any debt for the building, it was dedicated by the church conference.

By that time, plans were already under way for the second phase of construction which was to include the church offices, classrooms, an assembly room, the Earl North Fellowship Hall, and a kitchen. On June 7, 1959, the groundbreaking for the L shaped structure of Phase Two took place, and the architectural firm of Horlbeck, Hickman and Associates, AIA, of Mesa was hired as the architects for the addition. A construction workers' strike initially slowed work, but by April 9, 1960, the building was completed. With funds provided by the Larkin Fitch family, the patio area between the new structure and the sanctuary was enhanced as was an east entrance from the parking lot. Barracks from a WWII Japanese relocation camp near Casa Grande and houses on the east side of the property which had been used for classrooms were removed so adequate parking could be available. The acquisition of additional land over a period of several years made it possible to access the parking lot from Second Avenue as well as First Avenue.

Located at 15 East First Avenue, the church is currently known as the First United Methodist Church of Mesa.

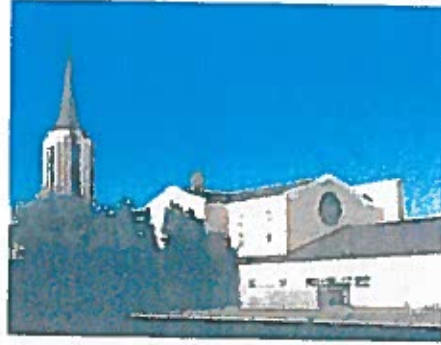




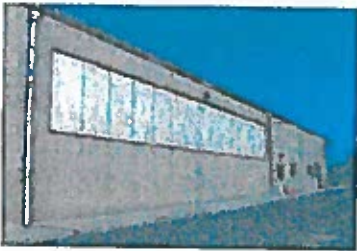
**First United Methodist Church of Mesa**



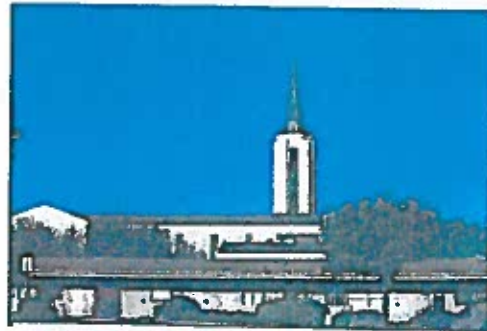
North side: Stewart Chapel and sanctuary



West side



South side: Earl North Fellowship Hall



East side: Classrooms and offices

**Photographs of surrounding areas as seen from the church property**



North of the church on First Avenue is the Mesa Arts Center.



West of the church on First Avenue are a Latter Day Saints Ward and a new apartment complex for seniors. The Goldwater Library will be built west of the apartments.



East of the church on First Avenue is the Mesa Court House, urban gardens, and the Mormon Temple.



South of the church is not visible due to the campus size and the parking lots.

## Criterion "C"

Chosen as architect for the First United Methodist Church was **Martin Ray Young, Jr.** who was a member of the Mormon faith and a descendant of Brigham Young, the Mormon leader who led them in the 1840's to Utah. He was the first architect in Mesa when he and has designed more than 1600 projects in a career that spanned more than 50 years.

Young graduated from Brigham Young University named after his descendants. He designed churches, residences, schools and commercial buildings, mostly in Arizona but also in New Mexico, California, Utah and Colorado. Some of his most prominent projects in Arizona include the First United Methodist Church of Mesa, Paradise Valley Apostolic Church, Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tempe, and the Mesa Historical Society Museum. He was the founding president of the Rio Salado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and a recipient of the prestigious Kachina Award from the Arizona College of Fellows of AIA.

Before his death in February 1999, he published a book titled, "The Work of Martin Ray Young, Jr. Architect, Mesa, Arizona". The First United Methodist Church of Mesa is shown in the book.

Correspondence from his third daughter, DeAnn Young McCune notes, "My dad patterned many of his lines after Frank Lloyd Wright – a personal friend of his.", "he loved being an architect. He decided to be one when he was about 6 and died @ 83 still drafting and designing."

The sanctuary building is described as follows:

"The building design expresses aspiration. The lines have an upward trend, expressing faith and praise in a material world. The tower, rising 120 feet, provides a note of climax, symbolizing hope... The long center aisle, leading from the entrance to the high altar, speaks of God's availability to all mankind... Our sanctuary is very plain in appearance, being devoid of any elaborate decorative symbols. Yet one cannot enter this place of worship without wanting to think of God, discover his will, and take his strength."

# PROJECT/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION REPORT

## PROJECT SUMMARY

REPORT DATE	PROJECT NAME	PREPARED BY
June 4, 2014	First United Methodist Church of Mesa	Jim Ripley and Wendy Mack-Allred

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Citizen Participation Plan is to inform citizens, property owners, neighbor associations, agencies, schools and businesses in the vicinity of the site of an application for a Historic Overlay. The site is located at 15 East First Avenue (corner of First Avenue and Center Street).

The request is for a rezone from DR-2 DE to DR-2 HL, to establish a Historic Landmark Overlay for the Church Sanctuary, Stewart Chapel and the Bell Tower.

This report is confirmation that citizens, neighbors, public agencies and interested persons have had adequate opportunity to learn about and comment on the proposed plans and actions addressed in the application. Supportive documentation is attached as required.

## CONTACT/AUTHORIZED APPLICANT

James Ripley	Telephone: 480-827-2859	Email: <a href="mailto:jimripleyaz@gmail.com">jimripleyaz@gmail.com</a>
Wendy Mack-Allred	Telephone: 480-641-9854	Email: <a href="mailto:mackallred@cox.net">mackallred@cox.net</a>

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

TASK	DATE SUBMITTED	NOTES
Application for Historic Register	11/19/2013	Submitted to John Wesley
Application Amendment	03/31/2014	Added additional info
Project Plan	01/04/2014	Submitted to John Wesley & Kim Steadman
City Rezone Application	01/06/2014	Submitted to John Wesley & Kim Steadman
Planning Case Number Assigned	04/30/2014	Case #HL14-001 from Kim Steadman, Planner
Public Notice Letters #1	05/07/2014	60 letters covering 500' radius
HPB Notification	04/30/2014	Done by, Kim Steadman
Public Notice - The Arizona Republic	05/07/2014	Paper & Online with AZCentral, Kim Steadman
Attend HPB Meeting	05/22/2014	Application Approved by HPB
Request P&Z Hearing	05/26/2014	Scheduled for 06/18/2014, Kim Steadman
Planning Case Number Assigned	05/27/2014	Case #Z14-032 from Kim Steadman, Planner

Public Notice-Church Bulletin	06/01/2014	650 Church Membership/Congregation
Public Notice Letters #2	06/02/2014	60 letters covering 500' radius
Public Notice 4'x4' Sign	06/02/2014	Church-Corner of 1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue & Center
Affidavit of Public Notice Posting	06/04/2014	Signed & Notarized, submitted to Kim Steadman
8"x10" Photo of Public Notice Sign	06/04/2014	Submitted to Kim Steadman
Citizen Participation Report	06/04/2014	Submitted to Kim Steadman, Planner

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

ISSUE	ASSIGNED TO	DATE
Resident phoned church and asked if the Church will receive a tax break with the zoning overlay change.	Jim Ripley	05/09/2014
<b>ANSWER</b>		
Resident received a call back from Jim Ripley		05/09/2014 @ 11:30am
The Church property is already exempt from property. t		

## CONCLUSIONS

To continue with Rezone for Historic Overlay for the Sanctuary, Stewart Chapel and the Bell Tower as planned.  
 To attend the P&Z Hearing date of 06/18/2014 and if approved to submit to the City of Mesa City Council Board for approval on 07/07/2014 and if approved to attend the Public Hearing scheduled for 07/21/2014.

## Comments regarding historic landmark status

Jim,

You received a call here at the church today, lady was asking all kinds of questions regarding church being registered as a Historic site. Her name is Kim Kifner [480-610-9090](tel:480-610-9090).

blessings,  
Rhonda R. Walkosz  
*Director of Youth*  
*First United Methodist Church of Mesa*  
[\(480\) 969-5577](tel:480-969-5577)

Call returned and Ms Kifner talked at about 11:30 a.m. on May 9. She wanted to know what the church gains from the change. I told her it is primarily recognition and prestige of being on the city's web site. She asked if the church gets a property tax break with the zoning overlay change. I told her, No it does not because the church is already exempt from property taxes.