

Three Generations of BOWENS & MALONES

GOING STRONG SINCE 1933



Albert & Olive Bowen on the QE2, 1970



Malone Family, Easter 1965,
(from L: Truman, Nancy, Lisa, Jean, Linda)



Lisa, Jean, Linda & Nancy Malone | Jan 2022

In the beginning (if we can begin in 1933), there was Albert and Olive, who begat Jean, who with her husband Truman, begat Linda, Lisa and Nancy...and so we have three generations of Bowens and Malones sharing their love at First United Methodist Church.



Truman & Jean with their daughters
Lisa, Linda, & Nancy

We begin this **150th Anniversary** with the Malone family story and their legacy at First Church. Many of you know Lisa or Linda or Nancy from their active participation in the church today, but did you know that their father Truman could make everyone laugh the First Church roasts or Supper Club game nights? Or that he was the touchstone usher at church for many many years and took that role very seriously? He also Chaired the Administrative Board and was on the Staff/Parish Relations Committee the year our beloved pastor Ralph Bates was selected.

Lisa recalled, *“Daddy was so involved in leadership roles. When I was asked to be on the Staff/Parish Committee and later the Board of Trustees, I knew it was hard work. But I always said ‘what would Daddy do?’ And he would say ‘serve on those committees.’”*



Truman and Jean Malone celebrating their 50th Wedding Anniversary at First Church, Oct 2000

Keeping step with Truman at the church was his wife Jean who was in Circle Six for over twenty-five years, chaired countless church committees and was the United Methodist Women's president for two years. When asked how she got Baptist raised Truman to join the Methodist church, she says

with a smile, "He was going to go where I went...he would have followed me anywhere." Truman and Jean were longtime members of the Wesley Sunday school

Jean's parents, Albert and Olive, joined First Church when Jean was five years old. Clovis Chappell was the pastor and Jean laughingly remembers going behind the chancel rail and tugging on his robe to get him to pay attention to her. During the

early years of Jean and Truman's sixty-eight year marriage, they lived in a small apartment across the street from Birmingham-Southern College, and next door to them was a family with a dashing teenage son named Buddy Ramsey.

Of her grandparents, Lisa says, *"They always sat in the back row and they left during the singing of the last hymn to go to Britlings Cafeteria on Highlands Avenue. They'd go through the line and get all of our food and when we got to Britlings the table was set."*



Malone girls with their grandparents
(top from L: Olive, Linda, Albert;
bottom from L: Nancy, Lisa)

The Malone Family has long been involved with music and performing at First Church. Truman loved the choir. As a child, Nancy recounted that it was allowed for her to draw on the church bulletin while the preacher spoke, but she had to stop when the choir was singing.

Nancy, Linda and Lisa were involved in many musical aspects of the church - youth choir, Hundred Acre Wood singing group, Chancel Choir and church musicals on stage...yes, these all really existed. Nancy was involved in church theater as a child, teen and adult, either acting or directing countless First Church productions.



Nancy Malone (center)
with Jean & Truman at
the church production of
Into The Woods, c.1991



First Church production of *The Sound of Music*,
c. 1979. 17 yr old Nancy standing second from L



First Church production of *Bells Are Ringing*, 1994,
which Nancy directed



Linda Malone & Beth Curry renew their wedding vows
at First Church, Feb 2020 (from L: Beth Curry, Linda Malone,
Stephanie Arnold, Katie Gilbert)

As adults the Malones reflect on First Church's acceptance of LGBTQ members. Says Linda, *"While growing up, the church was always accepting of individuals, but LGBTQ relationships weren't talked about and seemed to be a non-issue. Lisa added, "About six or eight years ago, Senior Pastor Keith Thompson gave a sermon on the handful of Scriptures wrongly used against LGBTQ people. He walked through each passage, explaining how insignificant they were and closed by strongly stating that First Church was an open place for all. He got a standing ovation. Daddy had tears in his eyes and went up to Keith and said 'thank you'."* Clearly being loved and accepted started at home.

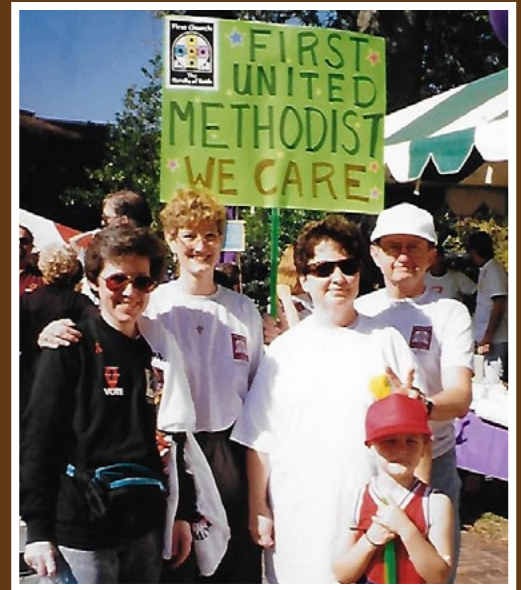
In February 2020 Linda and her wife Beth Curry renewed their wedding vows in the sanctuary at First Church. *"It was so meaningful to stand in the church that I grew up in and renew our vows. That was big."*

Lisa remembers fondly the church's first participation in the Birmingham AIDS Walk in the late 1990s. *"We met at Caldwell Park, we didn't have a big banner for the church but I made a bright green poster...it was Andy Keith, his late wife Ann, their grandson Gregory, Nancy McCracken, Sam Williamson and a few others...we had a little group, maybe ten or fifteen of us, and I was proud of that. David Wallace, Sam Williamson and Lonna Lynn were pastors."*

The three Malone daughters care deeply about the continued growth at First Church. Nancy reflected over the years, "One of my concerns was that our membership was going down because there were bigger, more flashy churches and people

could always choose to go closer to where they lived. But there was always a core of people that loved First Church that in spite of having to drive all the way from such and such you would still go...I'm so excited about the growth that we've had, and the new people, and the new energy-- that is what we have needed to have, but what I don't want to forget is our history, including our deep appreciation for our beautiful Sanctuary, a living and breathing part of all of us."

Wanting to always build on our rich history, Nancy expresses, *"It would be great if some of the younger new members have the opportunity to meet some of the older people...there has got to be this connection so we can merge into the next century with this history moving with them."*



First Church participates in Birmingham AIDS Walk, c.mid 1990s (from L: Lisa Malone, Nancy McCracken, Ann & Andy Keith, their grandson Gregory Keith)

STORIES FROM

150

YEARS