

Excerpt from a speech by Asbury CEO Ed Thomas, delivered May 11, 2011, as part of the celebration of Asbury Methodist Village's 85th anniversary.

“My name is Ed Thomas and I have had the privilege to be the Chief Executive Officer of Asbury Methodist Village and Asbury Communities for the past 24 years.

“David Denton, Asbury Methodist Village's Executive Director asked if I would start off today's program talking about Asbury's history. He will talk about the present and his vision of the future for Asbury Methodist Village.

“John Wesley founded a spiritual renewal club within the Church of England in the 1700s. He advocated that one's spiritual journey working toward perfection was lived out in the world doing Good for Others. His Rules of Conduct said:

*Do All The Good You Can,
By All The Means You Can,
In All The Ways You Can,
In All The Places You Can,
At All The Times You Can,
To All The People You Can,
As Long As Ever You Can.*

“He started orphanages, hospitals, homes for the elderly and alms houses, and credit unions. He sent missionaries to America. When the American Revolution broke out, he was a staunch royalist supporting King George III. And so, after the war, a new church, the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in the U.S and our namesake Francis Asbury was the first elected Bishop of the Methodist Church.

“This zeal for mission and serving ALL out in the world inspired a group of women at Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church South in DC to plan for a home for aged and orphans. The plans were delayed by WWI. After WWI, the plans moved on in earnest with a young pastor Herman Wilson being one of 5 ministers on a Board to organize such a home. The Wilson family led Asbury for 43 years of

its 85-year history. Representatives from Herman Wilson's family are here with us today; Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wilson, and Dr. Robert Wilson Jr. Welcome, and thank you for being a part of this celebration.

"The Magruder Farm at the edge of Gaithersburg was purchased, and construction of the original building was completed with a grand opening in April, 1926. At first, only members of the Methodist Church were admitted. Rev. J.J. Ringer was the 1st superintendent from 1926-1928. Then in 1928, Rev., later Dr. Herman Wilson, became the superintendent and he ran the Home until his retirement in 1963, at which time he became Chaplain emeritus and continued service, while his son Ronald Wilson became administrator and served as leader until 1981.

"When I arrived here in 1987, Lillian Wilson, Dr. Herman's wife, was still alive. She told me how hard everyone had worked through the years to plant the trees and landscape the campus to keep the organization going through difficult depression times. Above all, their mission was to serve the residents with high standards of respect and caring.

"Let me just share a few vignettes from this history:

"The Methodist Church was deeply involved in the mission of Asbury Methodist Village. There was an Asbury Guild comprised of women from local Methodist churches throughout the Baltimore Conference. These dedicated volunteers helped raise money to build the 1928 and 1948 expansions. They donated homemade canned goods to help feed residents during the Great Depression. A dairy farm was maintained on this parcel until almost 1970. These forbearers were entrepreneurial people called by their faith to support the mission here.

"In 1939, the Methodist Church, which had split during the Civil War, was reunited. And after WWII in 1945, two other retirement homes in Westminster, MD were merged with the Gaithersburg Home for Aged and Orphans to create Asbury Methodist Home. The original Gaithersburg Home had the Westminster and Cassell wings added in 1948. In 1954, as a result of a large gift, the first nursing infirmary was added – the Young wing in honor of the donor.

“As Asbury Home evolved through the 1960s, the idea of adding apartments to the campus and a modern nursing home to replace the infirmary began to inspire the Board and significant donors. After extensive planning and preparation, the Trott Apartments opened in 1970; followed by the Edwards-Fisher and Mund Apartments in 1974 and 1980.

“Meanwhile, the North wing of Wilson Health Care Center opened in 1974 and the South wing in 1980. With the advent of apartments in 1970, admissions were open to all – not just Methodists. The “New” Home was completed in 1985 and a portion of the original building became administration offices in 1986. The Diamond Building opened in 1990, the Villas across from the Main Campus in 1994-95; Kindley Assisted Living in 1997, Wallace Apartments in 1998, and the Rosborough Wellness and Cultural Arts Center in 2001, and Park View in 2005. The Courtyard Homes are our most recent addition; they were ceremoniously dedicated during a service of thanksgiving in the Guild Chapel earlier today. And, just this month construction has begun on three homes referred to as, “House for Betty” that we anticipate will create a new paradigm in housing for individuals faced with Alzheimer’s disease.

“Needless to say, a lot has changed since Asbury emerged 85 years ago. From its humble beginnings with five residents, today AMV is home to nearly 1,400 residents.

“Let me finish with some brief profiles of our residents and resident life. AMV is a community of highly talented, very bright, very engaged individuals who had outstanding achievements in their lives and continue to contribute to this community and the one that surrounds it. They are a people of diverse faiths, cultures, beliefs, life-experiences, and God-given gifts. When I think of residents from my past 25 years with this organization, I think of The Keese Continuing School of Continuing Education – a resident conceived and resident-run life-long learning school with multiple courses, programs, and college-like semesters throughout the year.

“I think of Edgar Camp, a resident who constructed Broadway stage sets and was an expert in origami Japanese paper art, Rev. Paul Conley, a farmer and school

teacher from WVU who became a Methodist pastor and started half-way houses for alcoholics in Baltimore.

“At one time, the oldest surviving alumnus of American University lived here and she was deeply concerned about the environment – we took her cause to heart and were one of the first organizations in Montgomery County to recycle our paper – we received an award from Montgomery County for that.

“At one time, the oldest living cheerleader alumnus from Penn State University lived in the “Home” and he had attended every home game in Happy Valley for 60 years. He was away every weekend when there was a game.

“Civil Rights leaders like Dr. Oscar Lee from the National Council of Churches, Cannon Feller, the engineer who spent his career in engineering finishing the National Cathedral, retired military, professors, teachers, bankers, architects, Sunday school teachers, musicians, secretaries, volunteers, pastors, and small business owners have all resided here, and have genuinely cared for their neighbors.

“Mr. and Mrs. Diamond were married later in life after their previous spouses died – He owned Sealtest Dairy in Washington, DC and she was the widow of a prominent banker. They gave \$2 million gift to start the Benevolent Care Endowment Fund to take care of residents with limited resources.

“Through the years, tens of millions of dollars have been provided in care for those with limited resources. What a marvelous history of a caring community, a community concerned for “All”. Congratulations, Asbury Methodist Village. You have a rich history, and one that should make you proud.”