



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP
and
Harmony Hill United Methodist Church
Present



Reflections of a Green Pastor

J. Lawrence Brasher

In 1971, when **Larry Brasher** was 23 years old, he became the pastor of two Methodist parishes, one in Stillwater and one in Swartswood. A native of New Jersey, he had completed his undergraduate degree at Duke University and was at the time a student at Yale Divinity School. During his eight-year tenure in Stillwater, he won the hearts of his two flocks and saw them merge into one: **Harmony Hill United Methodist Church**. This afternoon's stories are gleaned from Larry's many happy memories of the congregation of his first pastorate.

In 1973 Larry met **Louise Tharaud** of Maplewood at a Harmony Hill Church Sunday service. They were introduced by her mother, **Serena Hallett Tharaud**, who had grown up in Stillwater. They married the following year. Louise enrolled in a graduate program in Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University and commuted by bus from Newton. She also completed a certificate in Museum Training at the Metropolitan Museum of Art which launched her career as a curator. Before moving on to curate exhibitions at Duke University, Wake Forest and the Birmingham Museum of Art, Louise helped the **Stillwater Historical Society** to setup the first accessions system for the museum collection.

In 1979 the young couple moved to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina where Larry took up a teaching position for a decade. In recent years they have lived in Birmingham, Alabama, where Larry serves as the Denson N. Franklin Professor of Religion Emeritus at Birmingham Southern College. He also stewards a 400-acre woodland preserve, rich in old growth trees, at his family's ancestral home located an hour north of Birmingham.

Since leaving Stillwater, Larry has published prolifically on diverse topics including the history of religion in America, the Revolutionary War, botany, and the environment. His most recent book, *Antigodlin Stories of the Sacred Harp* is about the Alabama Sacred Harp singers, performers of a rich southern tradition of the 19th and 20th century, which he himself has practiced for more than sixty years.

Louise has shown herself to be equally multi-talented. Once in Alabama she decided to embark on a new mission and entered law school. Today she is working as an attorney in Legal Services Alabama.



Larry and Louise in 1974