

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WILSON, N. C.

THE FIRST METHODIST SERMON WAS PREACHED IN WILSON IN THE YEAR 1850. IN SEPTEMBER, 1853, FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF WILSON WAS ORGANIZED WITH SEVENTEEN MEMBERS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF REV. H. H. GIBBONS. THE FIRST CHURCH BUILDING WAS ERECTED THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 1854, REV. ALEXANDER GATTIS, PASTOR. AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD IN 1854 IT WAS DESIGNATED A STATION AND REV. O. J. BRENT APPOINTED PASTOR. IN 1855 A SUNDAY SCHOOL WAS ORGANIZED WITH PROF. E. W. ADAMS, SUPERINTENDENT; MR. AND MRS. WM. GRAY, MRS. W. D. ROUNTREE, WM. MURRY AND CALEB PARKER SERVING AS TEACHERS.

A SECOND CHURCH BUILDING WAS COMPLETED IN 1875 DURING THE PASTORATE OF REV. R. A. WILLIS.

THE PRESENT CHURCH BUILDING WAS BEGUN IN 1900, UNDER THE PASTORATE OF REV. J. B. HURLEY, AND COMPLETED IN 1904 UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF REV. A. P. TYER. INDEBTEDNESS ON THIS NEW STRUCTURE WAS PAID OFF DURING 1906, REV. F. D. SWINDELL, PASTOR. SERVICE OF DEDICATION WAS HELD SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1907, WITH THE REV. JOHN C. KILGO, D. D., PREACHING THE SERMON OF DEDICATION. THE MEMBERSHIP AT THAT TIME WAS 522.

IN 1923 THE EDUCATIONAL BUILDING, ATTACHED TO THE SANCTUARY, WAS ERECTED, REV. F. S. LOVE, PASTOR. EXTENSIVE RENOVATIONS WERE MADE TO THIS BUILDING DURING 1948-1949, REV. R. W. BRADSHAW, PASTOR.

DUE TO GROWTH OF THE CONGREGATION AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES A SURVEY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THE BUILDING OF A NEW EDUCATIONAL BUILDING. THIS PROGRAM WAS APPROVED BY CHURCH CONFERENCE AND A BUILDING AND BUILDING FUND COMMITTEE APPOINTED. ADDITIONAL GROUND WAS PURCHASED IN 1953 AND BY JUNE 27, 1954, BUILDING PLANS HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND CONTRACT LET AND GROUND BREAKING SERVICES WERE HELD. ON OCTOBER 24 CORNER STONE LAYING SERVICES WERE HELD. THE BUILDING HAVING BEEN COMPLETED AND FURNISHED, A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING WAS HELD FEBRUARY 16, 1956, FOLLOWED BY A SERVICE OF DEDICATION FEBRUARY 19, 1956, BISHOP PAUL N. GARBER PREACHING SERMON OF DEDICATION.

TWO OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF FIRST METHODIST CHURCH OF WILSON HAS BEEN THE ORGANIZATION OF TWO NEW METHODIST CHURCHES IN WILSON.

THE FIRST OF THESE WAS ORGANIZED THROUGH THE GENEROSITY AND LEADERSHIP OF MISS AZELIA (ZELL) WINSTEAD AND MISS CLEE WINSTEAD, SISTERS, WHO DONATED THE LAND FOR WHAT WAS TO BE KNOWN AS WINSTEAD METHODIST CHURCH, AND CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE BUILDING AND SUPPORT OF THIS NEW CHURCH. THE CHURCH WAS ORGANIZED IN SEPTEMBER, 1949, WITH 11 CHARTER MEMBERS. MOST OF THE CHARTER MEMBERS TRANSFERRED FROM FIRST CHURCH TO ASSIST IN THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WINSTEAD CHURCH, AND FIRST CHURCH HAS GIVEN ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT THROUGH THE YEARS. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF WINSTEAD METHODIST CHURCH IS 325. REV. R. W. BRADSHAW WAS PASTOR OF FIRST CHURCH DURING THIS PERIOD.

UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF FIRST METHODIST CHURCH ANOTHER METHODIST CHURCH WAS FORMALLY ORGANIZED APRIL 10, 1960, WITH A CHARTER MEMBERSHIP OF 77. A BUILDING SITE ON WEST NASH ROAD HAD BEEN PURCHASED AND WAS PRESENTED TO THE NEW CONGREGATION. THE LOT CONTAINED A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING, WHICH WAS USED FOR WORSHIP SERVICES AND SUNDAY SCHOOL UNTIL PLANS WERE MADE FOR THE ERECTION OF THE FIRST UNITS OF THEIR PHYSICAL PLANT, WHICH CONSISTED OF SANCTUARY, OFFICES AND CLASSROOMS. THE CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF WEST NASH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS 283. REV. R. GRADY DAWSON WAS PASTOR OF FIRST CHURCH DURING THIS PERIOD.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS 1700 PLUS, REV. CHARLES S. HUBBARD AND REV. J. THOMAS SMITH, PASTORS.