

October 11, 1964

HISTORY OF MOUNT SYLVAN METHODIST CHURCH

Through the efforts and services of a layman, Wesley Riggs, and a local preacher, Alexander Walker (better known as Uncle Lex Walker), worship services were begun in a brush arbor near the present Mount Sylvan Cemetery.

The first church building was started in 1885. Mrs. Sarah Ellen Cole, although a member of the Missionary Baptist Church, gave the first land for the cemetery and the church. This was latter added to by John E. Cole. Wesley Riggs was the carpenter who, assisted by J. M. Flintom, was responsible for the construction. J. M. Flintom and his wife contributed greatly to the growth of the church and development of the cemetery.

According to the best information available, it was in 1885 that the church which had been Mount Sylvan was accepted by the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was a part of the Durham Circuit which consisted of nine churches. The pastor of the circuit at that time was W. S. Davis.

In 1897 the Reverend J. H. McCracken became pastor. During his pastorate, even though living in these days was a struggle, and through the influence of this great man, the church was completed, paid for, and dedicated.

Before long the membership outgrew the existing building. Through the leadership and encouragement of the family of I. B. McKay it was decided to move the church to a new location, thereby giving more space for the cemetery and the church. A presbyterian layman, J. B. Mason, offered a new location across the road and five hundred dollars with which to begin construction. The building was completed in 1924 during the pastorate of the Reverend J. F. Starnes. This building was dedicated in 1926 while the Reverend M. C. Dunn, Sr., was pastor.

Trajedy struck one November Sunday in 1939. Fire destroyed the second building. Although Reverend Mr. Dunn had at this time three other churches, through his love and sympathy for the people of the community he soon lead the people to rebuild. The faithful friends and members were assisted by the liberal help of J. M. Ormond and the Duke Endowment. The building was completed in 1940 at a cost of \$15,500 with a dsbt of only three thousand dollars. Through the support of the membership and friends this debt was promptly retired. In the fall of 1944, D. W. Flintom of Charlotte offered five hundred dollars in the form of a challenge if the members would raise the remaining seven hundred dollars to retire the debt. The small but dedicated congregation went to work and before Christmas had gone \$300 over their goal.

The Mount Sylvan Cemetery has been well kept by the church through the years. Mr. J. M. Flintom, mentioned earlier, deeded two acres of land joining the cemetery as space for extension when needed. At the death of his wife, Mrs. Lizzie F. Flintom, a Trust Fund was established by Mrs. Flintom to maintain the cemetery permanently. What income from this trust fund not needed to maintain the cemetery was to be used as the church deemed wise.

During the seventy-nine years since her organization as Mount Sylvan Methodist Church, the church has been served by thirty-six ministers (a list of these minister is found on the following page).

Since her organization Mount Sylvan Church has remained a bulwark of

