

CHURCH HISTORY

It is impossible to ascertain the exact date of the founding of the Methodist Church body in the town of Jacksonville, North Carolina. The first house for Christian worship in Jacksonville was provided by the Masons in 1851, and it is reasonable to assume that there was a group of Methodists worshiping together prior to the War Between the States. The earliest recorded reference to the Jacksonville Church is found in the Methodist Episcopal Advocate, published in Raleigh, N. C., February, 1866. During these years the group of Methodists, in cooperation with the Baptists, conducted their services of worship on the lower floor of the Masonic Lodge Building.

During the summer of 1894, while in a revival campaign under the leadership of the Reverend G. W. Starling, pastor, a lot on Mill Avenue was procured from the Onslow Land and Improvement Company, and a Board of Trustees of the Jacksonville Methodist Episcopal Church was elected. These Trustees, George W. Taylor, Charles Gerock, and Frank Thompson, with the assistance of the pastor, succeeded in raising \$520.00. This, with the \$150.00 secured from the Board of Church Extension, was sufficient for the erection of a suitable house of worship. The cornerstone for the church was laid November 15, 1894, and the church was officially named "Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church."

The earliest available records reveal that the Jacksonville Methodists were originally served by the pastor of the Onslow Circuit of the Wilmington District. This circuit consisted of practically all the Methodist groups within the bounds of Onslow County. At the 1896 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, Trinity was taken from the Onslow Circuit and Richlands was taken from the Duplin Circuit to form a new charge known as the Jacksonville-Richlands Charge. In 1912, this charge was divided and Sneads Ferry, Folkstone, and Dixon were grouped with Trinity as the Jacksonville Charge. At the 1913 session of the Annual Conference, however, Jacksonville and Richlands were reunited, and they remained as a charge until the fall of 1941.

The church building at Mill Avenue was enlarged and remodeled to accommodate the growth of the church and to provide better facilities for church programs. The church school annex, a two-room frame building, was erected during the pastorate of the Reverend P. D. Woodall in 1912. By 1930, Trinity Church had grown so much that expansion was required. The Reverend L. A. Watts led the church to erect a two-story brick building to replace the first annex.

In May, 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and the Methodist Protestant Church united to form the Methodist Church. The church name then became, "Trinity Methodist Church." During 1939, while the Reverend H. L. Davis was pastor, a movement was launched to renovate the church edifice. Then in 1940, the reconstruction of the church was begun and, through the strenuous efforts of the Reverend I. T. Poole, a new brick building was constructed, the church was completely renovated, and was reopened for worship in June, 1941. In November, 1944, a big celebration was held to celebrate the dedication of the church building and to observe the 50th Anniversary of the church at Mill Avenue.

In 1941, the Jacksonville-Richlands Charge was divided, and Trinity and Verona became the Jacksonville Charge, which was still in the Wilmington District. Trinity became a station church in 1948, when the membership was 448. In 1954, Trinity was placed in the New Bern District.

Around 1950, it became quite evident that Jacksonville Methodists had outgrown their church facilities. Camp Lejeune had been established in 1941, and all the churches were finding it difficult to expand their programs and facilities to take care of the town's new residents. In October, 1952, Mr. D. L. Phillips of Charlotte gave a land parcel for a new church building on Bordeaux Street. Early in 1953, the Board of Trustees wrote the Conference Board of Missions and Church Extension about plans to relocate the church and build a new structure.

Under the leadership of Dr. T. B. Hough, the present building was undertaken, and a groundbreaking was held in December, 1954. During the construction period, services were held at the Iwo Jima Theater, because the church on Mill Avenue had been sold to the County Board of Education. The first service of worship in the new sanctuary was held on Sunday, May 6, 1956. Church membership at that time was 670. Attendance on that Sunday was 530 in the morning and 117 at evening worship!

Though the members of the congregation were excited and grateful for their beautiful new church building, they remembered the congregations who had gone before them. They brought with them records and furnishings from the Mill Avenue church. The old pulpit Bible and other items used in worship are currently in the church library, and the bell from the steeple of the Mill Avenue church is in the church fellowship hall. Stained glass windows were added to the sanctuary in the summer of 1964, during the pastorate of the Reverend L. A. Tilley.

In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church united to become the United Methodist Church. Since that time this congregation has been called, "Trinity United Methodist Church."

