

**Service of Dedication  
and  
History of  
Wrightsville United Methodist Church  
Wrightsville Beach, N. C.**



**ROBERT M. BLACKBURN**  
Resident Bishop of Raleigh Area

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Superintendent of the Wilmington District

**G. LLOYD EDGE, MINISTER**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1976**

Located at 4 Live Oak Drive, Harbor Island

## A HISTORY OF THE WRIGHTSVILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The story of the growth of Wrightsville United Methodist Church in the Wilmington District of the North Carolina Conference may well be likened unto the parable told by Jesus concerning the mustard seed. The seed was planted; it germinated; it was nourished, and it began to grow.



The Methodist Youth Center, located on Harbor Island, had been purchased by the Wilmington District of the Methodist Church. District Superintendent, The Reverend John C. Glenn, D.D., along with several families, recognized the need for a Methodist Church to serve the Wrightsville Beach area. Cottage prayer services were the first tangible steps directed toward that goal. On April 16, 1947 a Quarterly Conference was called and a resolution was passed authorizing the establishment of the Wrightsville Methodist Church. Our first church service was held the following Sunday, April 22. The Reverend A. C. Edens, a student at Duke Divinity School, was the first pastor. A Sunday school was started, and worship services were held the first and third Sundays of each month. Sixteen people became affiliate members, working in the Wrightsville Methodist Church, while retaining their membership in other Methodist churches. By November of 1947, the church had received seven people into full membership increasing to twenty by the end of the following year. Growth has steadily continued bringing our present membership to four hundred.

From the beginning, the small group visualized a church of its very own, and a building fund was started. A few faithful ladies of our church served meals to the Wrightsville Beach Lions Club twice monthly in the lower level of The Methodist Youth Center. The proceeds helped support the church budget and put a few dollars each month into the building fund savings account. Other fund raising activities, too numerous for this limited space, were conducted by our members and friends of the church. These projects continued to bring a trickle of money for the hoped-for future Methodist Church on Harbor Island.

In November, 1948 The Reverend Christian White became the first pastor to serve our church under Episcopal Appointment. From the be-

ginning of his appointment, worship services were held each Sunday morning at 11 a.m. A building committee was appointed, and the people continued to work diligently for their dream, a new church. After careful study concerning a location for the church, three lots at Live Oak Drive on Harbor Island were purchased on June 26, 1950. The "Virginia Plan" was selected and secured through Samuel N. Mayo, Architect, in the early part of 1952. Our meager savings in the building fund by then had grown to almost \$5,000.00.

The Reverend Ernest H. Smotherman, a student at Duke Divinity School, became our pastor in September of 1952. The people continued their faithful service to the church. In the spring of 1954, after receiving a check for \$3,500.00 from the Duke Endowment Fund, and a check of \$1,000.00 from the North Carolina Conference Board of Missions, there was great hope that the church soon would be started. Having received a bid on the construction, a Quarterly Conference was convened on the 28th of February. This conference authorized the trustees of the church to purchase another lot adjacent to our property and to borrow \$20,000.00 to begin construction of our new church building. The following Sunday, March 7, 1954, the Ground Breaking Service was held, and construction of



**First Ground Breaking Service, March 7, 1954.**

the building began the following week. On December 5, 1954 the first worship service was held in the new building with The Reverend Vergil E. Queen, Wilmington District Superintendent, delivering the sermon. Our church was part of a three point circuit with Epworth and Oleander for nine years. On June 27, 1957 Wrightsville Methodist Church became a station church, and The Reverend Paul Browning was appointed as our pastor. The church parsonage at 208 Cypress Avenue, Harbor Island, was purchased in the latter part of 1957. The Brownings, our first parsonage family, moved into their home just a few days before Christmas.

Additional lots were presented to the church in April, 1959 which provided space for a new annex. When the new addition was completed, it was placed in immediate use for a combination fellowship hall and church school rooms. The Reverend Auburn Lore was appointed to serve our church in June, 1960. He initiated a system of two worship services on

Sunday mornings during the summer months of 1961. Church attendance increased thirty per cent during the period when the two services were conducted. In September of 1961, a lovely Schulmerich Carillon electronic tape player was installed in the church. Since then twice each day beautiful music is amplified throughout the Wrightsville community. Four additional church school rooms were added to our educational building on the north side of the church in 1965.

The Reverend Ben F. Musser served as pastor of our church from 1965 until June, 1969. He was followed by The Reverend G. Weylon Cook who continued to serve as pastor until December, 1970. The Reverend George Ports, Sr. completed the conference year of 1971 as interim pastor. He was followed by The Reverend G. Lloyd Edge who continues as our minister to the present time.



In 1974 we purchased and paid for a new Allen Digital Computer Organ, refinished the interior walls of the sanctuary, and installed new carpet. Since January of 1974, our church has been carrying one full share of Missionary Salary Support for The Reverend and Mrs. Frank Anderson who are serving on the mission field in Zaire, Africa. In October, 1974 our church observed its Twentieth Anniversary with its first homecoming service and dinner on the church lawn. The Reverend Christian White, our first appointed pastor, delivered the sermon for the occasion; it was a fine day of fellowship for our church family. Many of our members who had moved away returned to renew old acquaintances and to share in the commemoration service of two decades in the life of Wrightsville Methodism. In the early months of 1976, the members and friends of our church graciously responded to an appeal to raise \$14,000.00 to retire our church debt, five years ahead of schedule.

Truly, the Wrightsville United Methodist Church has been richly blessed throughout its life with dedicated, devoted, and loyal people who love God and their fellowman. Through their generous service to the church, and the gifts which they have shared, they have made possible a living testimonial of their Christian faith whereby future generations may remember them and call them blessed.