

The Birth and Growth of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church

20th Anniversary
1964-1984



4706 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612

The Reverend C. CLYDE TUCKER, Pastor

HOW LOVELY IS THY DWELLING PLACE

How lovely is Thy dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts, to me!
The tabernacles of Thy grace
How pleasant, Lord, they be!

My thirsty soul longs ardently,
Yea, fainst Thy courts to see:
My very heart and flesh cry out,
O living God, for Thee.

Behold, the sparrow findeth out
An house where-in to rest;
The swallow also for her-self
Provided hath a nest;

Even Thine own altars, where she safe
Her youngs one forth may bring,
O Thou Almighty Lord of hosts,
Who art my God and King.

Blest are they Thy house that dwell,
They ever give Thee praise,
Blest is the man whose strength Thou art,
In whose heart are thy ways.

From Psalm LXXXIV
Scottish Psalter, 1650

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to our pastors for their support in preparing these twenty years in the life of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church. William G. Sharpe, Willie S. Teague, Dr. Brian G. Gentle and C. Clyde Tucker have given much of their time and service to this church and their part in this history makes the history of Benson come alive.

After Mildred Smith, Judy Brenner, Grace Hale and your Chairman gathered the material we were pleased to have Marilyn Spencer edit and make the many corrections before Grace Hale typed the final draft.

Ted Reynolds came to the rescue and allowed us to use his word processor to prepare the work for the printer.

We are all indebted to the wonderful support with pictures and suggestions in preparing the first twenty years of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church.

L. H. (Legs) Johnson
Chairman

IN DEDICATION.....

Benson Memorial United Methodist Church is serving the glory of God within this community resulting from the love of Mr. Benson for his Lord and fellow-man. The wife of Baxter Barrington Benson of Raleigh, Lula Underhill Benson stipulated that the residue of her will be used to establish a Methodist Church to be named after her husband.

Mrs. Benson's sister, Mrs. Corydon S. Jones and her nephew, Clifton L. Benson, lended generous personal support to the church. During the growth of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church, Cliff Benson has supported the church in many projects in a most gracious and generous way. It is through the support of the Benson family that we are so very proud to be known as Benson Memorial United Methodist Church.

IN MEMORY

| | |
|---------------------------|------|
| SHARI LYNN CRUZ | 1977 |
| ALICE WRIGHT GELLETTE | 1979 |
| HENRY PURVIS SMITH, JR. | 1980 |
| ROBERT CHRISTOPHER GRAHAM | 1981 |
| *GENEVIEVE WOOTEN JOHNSON | 1982 |
| MARY BONNER DEPUY | 1982 |
| WILLIAM CHAPMAN | 1983 |
| ROBBIE SUE GREGORY | 1983 |
| ROBERT LYNN SMITH | 1983 |
| TAMMY CONKLIN DAY | 1983 |
| *EUNICE BELL HENRY | 1984 |

*CHARTER MEMBERS

CHARTER MEMBERS - BENSON MEMORIAL METHODIST CHURCH

1964

Robert and Marge Blackwell

Ota Mae Campsey

Mrs. Eunice B. Henry*

Mrs. Violet Davis - Donna, Sandra, Cheryl

Barry Frazellé

Elizabeth Hedden

Tom and Martha Gould

Robert and Ann Grissom

Tom and Tommie Hobgood

Lehman and *Genevieve Johnson - Lee, Julian, Steve, Candy

Herbert Mace

Lawrence and Margie Moore

Howard* and Mary Nell Newton

John and Shirley Phillips

Pete and Peggy Reynolds

Ted and Peggy Reynolds

John and Neva Rafield-Carolyn

Mr. and Mrs. Caswell Riddle

Henry and Harriet Stoneham

Mrs. Mary Jane Walton-Patsy, Pam

Bill and Barbara Sharpe

Chancie and Pat Moore

*deceased

FIRST ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD FOR
BENSON MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1964

OFFICERS

Chairman Official Board--Lt Col L.H. Johnson, Jr.
Commission on Membership and Evangelism--Mr. L. C. Moore
Commission on Stewardship and Finance--Lt Col L.H. Johnson, Jr.
Commission on Education--Mrs. D. L. Davis
Commission on Mission--Miss Carolyn Raffield
Commission on Christian Social Concerns--Mr. Barry Frazelle
Superintendent of the Church School--Mrs. D. L. Davis
President of MYF--Miss Donna Marie Davis
Church Treasurer--Mrs. J. W. Raffield
Church Secretary--Miss Carolyn Raffield

TRUSTEES:

Lt. Col. L. H. Johnson, Jr., Chairman
Mr. Clifton Benson
Mr. Ted R. Reynolds

STEWARDS:

Mr. R. L. Blackwell
Mrs. W. Carl Walton, Jr.
Mrs. H. B. Stoneman

Chairman of Worship--Mrs. H. A. Newton
Chairman of Music--Miss Beth Hedden
Chairman of Scouting--Mr. L. C. Moore

Building (planning)
Mr. L. C. Moore, Chairman

METHODISM IN NORTH CAROLINA

The United Methodist Church is now making plans to celebrate its two hundredth anniversary in 1984. Organized Methodism has been in existence ten times as long as has Benson Memorial United Methodist Church.

Methodism began in England as a reform movement against the Church of England. Francis Asbury, a young missionary appointed by John Wesley, set sail from England in 1771 to spread the Word of God in America.

George Whitefield, a personal friend of John Wesley, had made several trips across the North Carolina colony between 1738 and 1770. He introduced Methodism into North Carolina when he preached in New Bern in 1739. Just ten years before that date, it had been reported that there was not a single clergyman in the entire colony. He spoke of North Carolina as being an "ungospelized wilderness". Whitefield was probably a greater preacher than John Wesley, but he organized no societies and built no churches. As a result, today there is no group in North Carolina or elsewhere that traces its beginning to Whitefield. What he did accomplish was to keep alive a "spiritual expectancy," according to an early historian. Joseph Pilmore established the first permanent foothold of Methodism in the colony at Currituck House on Sept. 28, 1772, and in 1776 a North Carolina circuit was formed with 683 members.

John Wesley had asked Methodists in the colonies to remain loyal to the mother country and Methodism was not popular during the time of the Revolutionary War. It was not until 1780 that a renewed activity in the church took place. Wesley never set out to create a new sect or church. He believed that the Methodist movement should remain part of the Mother Church. Nevertheless, Wesley's followers formed a separate church at the Christmas conference in 1784 in Baltimore. People from Maryland and Virginia began to move south to North Carolina bringing with them Methodism. By this time, three circuits had been formed.

During the spread of Methodism, Francis Asbury traveled through central and eastern sections of North Carolina. His journeys on horseback carried him to people who had spiritual needs. As Thomas Coke and Asbury were busy traveling about supervising the work, Methodism grew strong.

It was during these travels that Superintendent Coke came from the north to meet with Superintendent Asbury, who had been in the Wilmington-Waccamaw Lake area. The men met at the home of Green Hill in Louisburg on April 20, 1785. Here the first formal meeting of the Methodist Episcopal church and the first Annual Conference of the new church took place in North Carolina. New circuits were formed on the frontier and across the mountains. The center of Methodism in the state was in Louisburg, so again the Conferences were held there in 1792 and 1793.

In 1796, the General Conference created a fixed geographical boundary and divided North Carolina, part going to Virginia and part to South Carolina. A great revival period followed and the church experienced great growth between 1798-1805. During this seven-year period, there was an increase in membership of 3,326 whites and 353 blacks. Despite strife, persecution and hardship, Methodism spread through North Carolina. There were few church edifices and many times meetings had to be held in groves and pastures. The people would camp for days and nights to participate in religious worship. Singing was important to all services and the Methodist Hymnal was published. The official religious newspaper, the North Carolina Christian Advocate, first was published in 1855.

For nearly 50 years, a bitter dispute was carried over the boundaries of the conferences. North Carolina had been divided between South Carolina and Virginia before the turn of the century and finally in 1836 the North Carolina Conference was formed by dividing part of the Virginia Conference. South Carolina continued to contain all counties joining the South Carolina line. In 1850 South Carolina gave up part of the conference but not until 1870 did they relinquish the area within the state boundaries to the North Carolina Conference. Virginia still held the north-eastern portion of the state until about 1898. The North Carolina Conference had long supported Randolph Macon College, but after withdrawing their support they were granted the goal of unifying all of North Carolina within the state's borders. When this was done, Virginia withdrew its support of High Point College.

When the Christmas Conference met in 1784 in Baltimore, they stated that no Methodist clergy or member should own slaves. This created a bitter quarrel during the Civil War era between the Northern and Southern Methodists. Finally, in May 1845, at the 16th Annual Conference the slave-holding states met and renamed themselves The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The growth of the church was complicated with the demands for democracy within the church. There were some members in the state who did not believe in slavery and were driven either underground or out of the state to the western part of the nation. Up until this time there had been one place of worship with all races meeting together. After the Civil War, separate churches were formed by the Negroes. In 1870 black members no longer officially existed in The Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

It was not until 1939 that the three main bodies of the Methodist Church merged. The Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church then became The Methodist Church. A formal discussion began in 1956 to once again merge the Methodist Church. In April 1968, The Methodist Church became the United Methodist Church.

The State is divided into two conferences, the North Carolina Conference and the Western North Carolina Conference, and they meet separately in Annual Conferences. The church owns seven institutions of higher learning in the state. They are Bennett, Brevard, Greensboro, High Point, Louisburg, Methodist, North Carolina Wesleyan, and Pfeiffer College. The church also gives support to Duke University. Education has always been an important issue in the Methodist Church. In 1899 an orphanage was begun in Raleigh, now known as the Methodist Home for Children. The conference now owns retirement homes in Durham, Lumberton and Charlotte.

Through sacrifices of dedicated men and women for over 300 years, Methodism has grown throughout the state. Political issues as well as church issues have at times divided the church, but now, hopefully, both in North Carolina and the nation Methodism will be unified for years to come.

Birth and Growth
of
Benson Memorial United Methodist Church



WILLIAM G. SHARPE
Pastor

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

BENSON MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Raleigh, North Carolina
1963-1969

I have been asked to reflect upon the earliest history of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church. It has given me great pleasure to recapture the happenings of those exciting times. The reader is invited to use his or her memory or imagination to fill in all the many faces and events which I have omitted, but which are, nevertheless, vital to the history of this great church.

I grew up in the small town of Elm City in Wilson County, NC. After receiving my high school diploma from Elm City High School, I enrolled in Duke University where I earned a B.A. degree with a major in political science. During the latter part of my undergraduate education, I decided to enter Duke Divinity School. At the time I had a strong interest in the field of communication, particularly in the area of religious drama. While a student at Duke, I had participated in student theater and had spent two summers in Lancaster County, PA, working in summer stock.

Circumstances altered my course. Midway through my senior year of graduate school, I was interviewed by Dr. Edgar B. Fisher of Front Street Methodist Church in Burlington, NC, where the congregation was in search of a weekend student assistant. In January of 1960 I accepted the position and continued to commute from Durham to Burlington until I graduated in June of that year. Five days after my graduation from Divinity School, on June 11, I was married to Barbara Eberly of Ephrata, PA. We had met while I was working as technical director at the Ephrata Legion Star Playhouse. Barbara had graduated from Allegheny College with an elementary education degree.

The congregation of Front Street Church decided to hire its first assistant minister and invited me to fill that position in the summer of 1960. Barbara and I moved into our first home and spent three highly rewarding years in Burlington.

Prior to the 1963 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, the District Superintendent, Dr. T. B. Hough, offered Barbara and me an interesting choice for our second appointment. We could move to the Outer Banks, or we could accept the challenge of organizing a new congregation in Raleigh. We chose the latter, and in July we came with Jan, our two-year-old daughter, to the state capital to organize a new congregation under the name Northwest Methodist Church.

Upon our arrival, we discovered that there were no other persons involved with us in this adventure except the members of the Raleigh Board of Missions and Church Extension, Inc. who, having foreseen the growth of northwest Raleigh, had possessed the vision to purchase a 4-1/2 acre church site on Highway 50 North. On the property were two dwellings, a two-bedroom home and a very small house which was being rented to a N.C. State University student. The area was a garden spot with every imaginable species of plant and flower and tree. Wildlife was plentiful, ranging from beautiful songbirds to unwelcome copperheads.

Not everyone agreed with Raleigh District Superintendent Graham S. Eubank and the Board of Missions about the need for a new church. After all, there were no restaurants in the area with the exception of the Ranch Motel. There were only 16 homes in Oak Park. There were no public schools, and the much talked-about shopping center to be built on the Kidd Brewer property was only a wild rumor. Others were quick to point out that the site was poorly chosen

since the only access to Creedmoore Road was from the westbound lane of Highway 70. Still others conjectured that there would never be enough people to start a church since there was already a sufficient number of churches in the area. With the support of the district superintendent and the blessing of the Raleigh Board of Missions, we moved into the larger home on the property and began the task of organizing a new congregation.

Although I said there were no people waiting in northwest Raleigh to build a church, I was given the name of one prospect. Rushing to the home of Violet Davis on Leesville Road, I chanced to arrive in her living room at the exact same moment that her pastor had chosen to visit. An overwhelmed, dejected young minister sensed that he was face to face with a formidable challenge.

On the brighter side, there was another very important source of support. The wife of Baxter Barrington Benson of Raleigh, Lula Underhill Benson, had stipulated that the residue of her will be used to establish a Methodist Church which would be named for her husband. In accordance with her wish, Northwest Church was to become Benson Memorial Methodist Church. Mrs. Benson's sister, Mrs. Corydon S. Jones, and her nephew, Clifton L. Benson, were to lend generous personal support to the project. Later Cliff Benson was to become a trustee and a member of the initial building committee.

During the summer we started the slow process of canvassing all the homes in the vicinity. We mapped out the targeted areas of Brookhaven, Deblyn Park, Oak Park, Glen Forest, Laurel Hills, Leesville Road and Leadmine Road. It was a matter of knocking on each door and telling the residents about our exciting plan to organize a new church. Very early it became obvious that if we were going to interest people, we would need a meeting place. Since there were no schools, business meeting rooms or other community buildings, we decided that our only hope was the rather unlikely metal structure which housed the Skate Town Roller Rink. When I approached co-owner Joe Hummel with the idea, he looked me straight in the eye and without one moment's hesitation exclaimed, "Parson, we got ourselves a church!" From that day, Joe and his co-partner, Ben West, were to be steadfast supporters.

By fall we had a nucleus of people who were ready to launch the services. The decision was made to hold the first church service at Skate Town Roller Rink on Sunday, October 6, 1963. On that day approximately 25 persons entered the make-shift church for worship. To my surprise, one of the persons who helped me set up chairs for the service was Jesse O. Sanderson, who was then superintendent of Raleigh City Schools. I had previously gone to Sanderson's office to discuss the possibility of using a public school for our worship services. His interest in our plans subsequently led him to become a member of the church.

The next step was to offer a church school program, so on the following Sunday we stationed volunteers in the four corners of the skating rink and opened with classes for nursery children, elementary children, youth, and adults. Our enthusiasm was somewhat aborted when not one single person showed up for the first day of classes! Little did we know then the other obstacles that were to follow. It was to be a cold winter, especially in an uninsulated building; however, the handful of committed people was undaunted. Each Saturday evening for eight months one of the younger members would go with me to make preparations for church on Sunday. Arriving after the closing of the skating rink at midnight, we would work for several hours running off the church bulletin, setting up chairs, and dusting the pulpit and piano. During the coldest months, we partitioned off a section of the skating rink with a heavy mill plastic which we rolled by hand. Then we fired up two Salamander

heaters to knock off the chill. It was not unusual to see the minister and congregation wearing heavy overcoats during services. In those days the sermons were somewhat shorter than usual, but we were all long on enthusiasm.

There was never any question in our minds that families came to Northwest Church not for convenience, but out of true dedication! For the first few months church attendance was averaging approximately 20 and church school a few less. It was during that winter in the skating rink that we experienced what later became known as "Smoke Sunday". Of all days for Bishop Paul N. Garber to make an unannounced visit to our church! He chose the day when our space heater had decided to back up smoke. When the Bishop appeared on the scene, I was standing at the door with a large piece of cardboard desperately fanning smoke out of the building. I introduced the Bishop to Ben Best who was literally covered with soot from head to toe. Ben was later to recall, "Parson, the Bishop shook my hand and it was as black as the ace of spades with soot!" Then there were happier days that winter, like the day when Miss North Carolina, Jeannie Swanner, showed up to worship with us. In those days, whenever Joe Hummel had the opportunity to introduce me, he always said, "The parson here takes care of the holy and I take care of the roller."

There were other memorable occasions. Once my friend, Dr. Leon Russell, preached for us in the skating rink and he was forced to pause for 10 minutes until the rain stopped riveting the tin roof. On one occasion I was invited to perform a wedding ceremony on skates, but declined explaining that I was in charge of the "holy" but not the "roller"!

One very important moment of history was made in the Skate Town Roller Rink. On March 22, 1964, 24 persons were received into the church as the first charter members. The Rev. LaFon C. Vereen, Executive Secretary of the North Carolina Conference Board of Missions, preached, while District Superintendent Graham Eubank spoke the official words to declare the church organized. The first family called forth that day was Violet Davis and her three daughters, Donna, Sandra and Cheryl. The Davis girls were to become the nucleus of the Methodist Youth Fellowship of Benson Memorial Church. Other charter families received on the Palm Sunday were those of J. Thomas Gould, Lehman H. Johnson, Jr., Herbert F. Mace, Chancie M. Moore, Lawrence C. Moore, Howard A. Newton, John W. Raffield, Caswell A. Riddle, William G. Sharpe, Henry B. Stoneham and Mrs. W. Carl Walton. Individuals received on the charter Sunday were Ota Mae Campsey, Barry Frazelle, Elizabeth Hedden and Carolyn Raffield (who became the first church secretary). Bob Vaughn was received as an affiliate member.

The long, hard winter and spring finally gave way to summer. The heat of the summer drove us back to the church property where during the month of June we experienced a unique worship setting. We met outside under the trees in almost the identical spot where the temporary sanctuary of the first unit was to be built. It was during this period that the Ted R. Reynolds family was received into the church. One Sunday we had a beautiful communion service under the open sky. It was our custom at that time to serve iced tea between Sunday School and church. Some will remember the Sunday that our daughter Jan drank too much tea and baptized the grounds during benediction. Those who were there went away with a smile on their faces recalling very little, if any, of the ceremony.

July of 1964 was an important month for the church because our family moved into the beautiful parsonage on Deerwood Drive in Glen Forest. This was a \$22,500 venture of faith which later proved to be very wise. Robert L. Blackwell played an important part in negotiating for the parsonage. Barbara remembers this time with much gratitude. Since we moved into the house just

one month before the birth of our second child, Bobbi, a handful of church members insisted on moving us "lock, stock and barrel" into our new home. Richard C. Haws was instrumental in beautifying the yard with flowers, and several church members worked diligently transplanting dogwoods and other trees to the Deerwood Drive location. A magnificent 15-foot magnolia tree was planted in the front yard, which promptly withered and apparently died, but was cut off 18 inches above the ground and eventually sprouted back and grew tall.

Our move to the new parsonage enabled the congregation to have services in the house which is now the scout hut. Several men in the congregation brought hammers and crowbars to remove the walls of the house to provide adequate meeting space. So, having met outdoors for the early part of summer, we moved into our third place of worship. Almost overnight, we were prepared to seat approximately 100 persons for worship. We continued to meet in the house and to hold Sunday School classes in the smaller house until the winter of 1965. By the last Sunday in January, the steep incline had made the rocky road coming into the property impassable. Again, there were many memories associated with this era. For one thing, it always seemed strange to be preaching from a pulpit that was standing directly where our bedroom was once located, while the congregation sat in our old kitchen. On one occasion the phone rang during the sermon. I paused and asked one of the young persons in the congregation to answer it. It turned out to be a wrong number, so we proceeded with the service. Also vivid in my mind was the day a couple came prepared to have their little baby baptized. Realizing that because of frozen pipes there was no water anywhere on the property, I sent Steve Johnson to the nearest service station for "holy water".

Faced with the problem brought on by the winter weather, we began to look at other options. By this time, J. W. York Elementary School had been built in Brookhaven. We contacted Mr. Sanderson, who generously helped us to work out arrangements to hold Sunday morning services in the school. Our membership of approximately 100 persons moved our worship service to the school auditorium which we were to rent until the completion of the first unit of our church building in the summer of 1965. Throughout our search for a "church home", some things remained constant, such as the pulpit loaned to us by the Lutheran Church in North Hills and the communion set which was contributed by Aldersgate Methodist Church in Chapel Hill. The other common thread which ran with us throughout was the intense desire to build a church. The Spirit continued to move us in that direction.

A nine-member building committee had been established with Bob Blackwell as chairman. The other members of the building committee were Legs Johnson, Ted Reynolds, Cliff Benson, John Phillips, Mary Jane Walton, Henry Clegg, Pete Reynolds, and Red Moore. Shirley Phillips served as Building Fund Treasurer. The committee worked hard and the congregation was kept abreast of its plans through the Benson Beacon, a church newsletter which was first published on September 24, 1964. Members of the Building Committee began to visit other churches in the conference and to talk with church officials. After having interviewed six prominent architects, the committee chose Bob Rogers of Raleigh. The choice was based not on Rogers' experience in drafting church plans, but on his perception in understanding our dreams and his eagerness to become involved in those dreams. Bob Rogers was to start, not with the concept of a building to be placed on our property, but with the dream of a handful of people, a beautiful piece of property and an open, imaginative mind.

The question which loomed before all of us was a big one: "How can 19 families raise enough money to build the church that we know will be needed for this community?" The answer began to come from several sources. First, we had seed money from the will of Mrs. B. B. Benson amounting to approximately

\$40,000. In addition, the North Carolina Annual Conference named Benson Memorial as a "Ten Dollar Club Church." These combined sources gave us approximately a \$55,000 start toward our dream. Bob Blackwell, Chairman of the Building Committee, gave the project an enormous thrust when we came forth with a check for \$1,000 to begin the building fund. That generous act was the first sign that we could accomplish our goal. Others were to follow with their sacrificial gifts and eventually we had raised enough money to negotiate a loan to begin our \$122,000 structure with Inland Construction Co. as our builder. Later we were to learn that the cost would be closer to \$150,000 by the time we paved parking lots and opened the doors; however, we were committed and there was no stopping us!

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 28, 1965, all the members of the congregation brought shovels to break ground for the new building. The groundbreaking address was delivered by Bishop Garber. Others participating in the ceremony along with the Bishop were Raleigh District Superintendent Nicholas W. Grant, L.C. Vereen and R. L. Blackwell.

The preliminary plans approved by the Quarterly Conference, after 21 official meetings of the Building Committee, called for eight classrooms and a fellowship hall, half of which was to be used as a sanctuary. It was the belief of many members that we should have a place with a look of permanence in which to worship, baptize our children and marry our daughters. We, therefore, planned to install pews and to secure them to the floor. The chancel area was to be given a rustic appearance with cedar shakes behind a polished aluminum cross and the communion table. The cedar theme also was used with the lectern and pulpit. A partition was to separate the temporary sanctuary from the kitchen, leaving room for a Sunday school class or the overflow of the Sunday morning congregation. The partition was to be affectionately referred to by Legs Johnson as our "permanary wall", symbolizing that we were near the end of our nomadic search for a place of worship. For the exterior of the building, we decided upon a split concrete block. On the outside doors, once again we would place cedar shakes with a tri-cross symbol on each door. For us, this was to be a symbol of the three crosses on Calvary which invited every man, woman and child of whatever status entering these doors for worship to be a part of our congregation and God's Kingdom.

The first Sunday worship service was held in the new church building on July 17, 1966. On that day at 11 a.m., a consecration ceremony was conducted and the congregation gave thanks. Actually, the very first worship service in the building, even before its completion, was the wedding of Carolyn Raffield and Bob Gidney on June 25. Introducing Carolyn and Bob was to be my only real success in the art of "matchmaking". Moving into the new building was like a dream-become-reality!

In the early life of the church we had many goals. Our first goal was simply to be a warm, supportive, caring church. We wanted the presence of God to be felt. We wanted to be a church where the laity makes the significant decisions. We wanted missions to others to be equally as important as nurturing our own lives. We wanted to be steeped in the traditions of the church; yet, open to innovative ways of making the gospel relevant. We wanted to make sure that we grew spiritually while we grew in size. We wanted our music to come from the heart, which was typical of the music of Anne Jenkins since she organized the first choir. We wanted to continue an emphasis on family programming. We wanted to support the scouting program which had been us from the beginning, thanks to the leadership of people like Coy Brown and Fred Greger. We wanted Christian education to be a very important part of our ministry. We wanted to build an amphitheater along the bank of the ravine where we could worship outdoors. We wanted someday to build on this beautiful

spot a permanent sanctuary in which to praise God. Most of all, we wanted never to lose our faith to risk doing what we perceived as God's will. At this 20th anniversary celebration, we have only to look around to see that the early faith of the congregation is still intact.

Benson Memorial United Methodist Church will always have a special place in our hearts. There were moments in the early days when Barbara and I became so discouraged that we were ready to give up. It was just at those times that God chose to open a new door. In December of 1963, I became convinced that the strong leaders in the local Methodist churches were not about to leave the comfort and security of their well-established programs to accept the challenge of joining a small, struggling congregation. Then on a rainy day in January, while we and the entire nation were still in shock over the death of John F. Kennedy, Legs and Genevieve Johnson walked through the doors of the skating rink with their four children--Lee, Jule, Steve and Candy. This was an answer to prayer. Legs was to become the first Administrative Board Chairman for the new chartered church. Bill Richburg had served as the interim chairman until the church changed its name from Northwest Methodist Church to Benson Memorial.

There were lonely moments. The early '60s had been a time when the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum. I had a strong belief that something had to be done to rectify discrimination. Believing that nothing else could make the necessary impact on our nation, I decided to participate in the first lunch counter "sit-ins" at Kresses in Durham. In Raleigh I continued to believe that the movement was the only way to jar us out of our complacency. My name appeared on a civil rights petition in The News and Observer. Several irate calls from sincere people followed. In need of a friend, I came to the church in search of our first custodian, Lemual Mial. There, in one of the front classrooms, Lemual turned off the floor buffer and we knelt in prayer. One caller had suggested that "We are Southerners, and it's time we acted like Southerners!" to which I later responded with a sermon entitled, "We are Christians, and it's time we acted like Christians!"

In 1964, when our daughter Bobbi was born in Rex Hospital with multiple congenital heart defects, we found ourselves completely surrounded by this warm congregation. They rallied to raise a large sum of money to help pay for her open-heart surgery. We can never forget the prayers and support that came to us in that experience. The church has never lacked in its miracle workers.

Most important to our family has been the lifelong friendships which we developed through Benson Memorial Church. Wherever we go, the church and its people will always be a part of us. We saw a pioneering spirit that personified the saying, "The impossible takes a little longer."

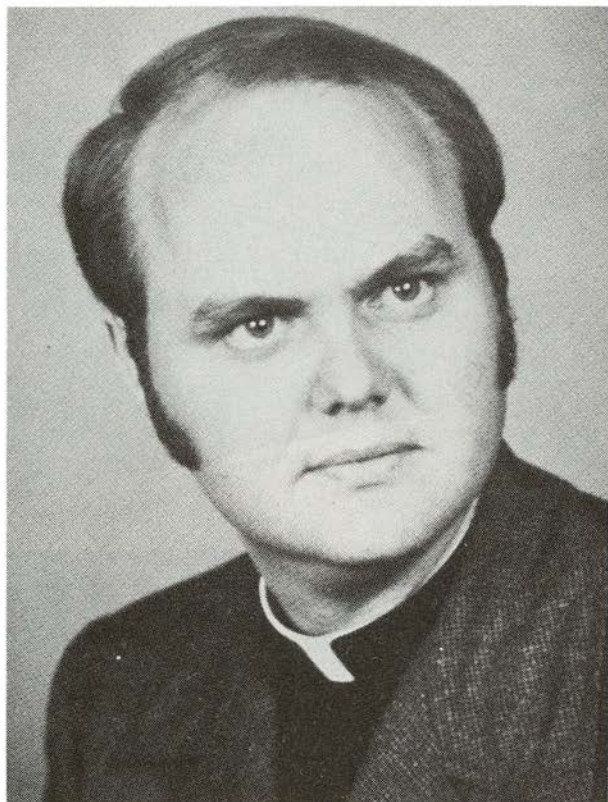
In the summer of 1969 our family moved to Burlington where I became associate minister at Front Street United Methodist Church. The following year, Susan, our third daughter, was born. Three years later, I accepted a position with Elon College as Chaplain to Students and Director of Publications. During my 12 years at the college I have served as Director of Student Activities, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs and in my current capacity as College Chaplain and Director or Personal Counseling. For several years, Barbara has held the position of associate director of the Alamance County Arts Council. Our daughter, Jan, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a major in advertising journalism and is employed by Roche Biomedical Laboratories in Burlington. Bobbi is completing her sophomore year at UNC-Wilmington, while Susan, our competitive swimmer, is on the threshold of senior high school.

We have been blessed in so many ways in our lives. Many of those blessings God gave us through the people of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church. May God bless this church as it enters its 21st year.





Birth and Growth
of
Benson Memorial United Methodist Church



WILLIAM S. TEAGUE
Pastor

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

REV. WILLIE S. TEAGUE

The appointment in 1969 to Benson Memorial United Methodist Church was my first appointment after seminary but it was not my first pastoral appointment. I was first appointed to the Jackson Grove Methodist Church in the Spartanburg District of the South Carolina Conference. That was in February 1964. I was 19 years old and a sophomore at Wofford College. I continued to serve as a student pastor until graduation from Wofford in June of 1966. Upon graduation I entered Duke Divinity School and worked as an "endowment" student both summer and winter throughout my first two years. While a senior I was appointed to the Warren Circuit. During my year on Warren Circuit, I decided to transfer to the North Carolina Conference in order to become the pastor of Benson Memorial. The Rev. N. W. Grant, Raleigh District Superintendent, was the person most influential in my transfer.

As I told the congregation on my first Sunday in the pulpit of Benson Memorial, being appointed to Benson Memorial was the fulfillment of a dream. I had responded to the call to ministry while in the 10th grade in high school. From then until June 8, 1969, I had dreamed of graduating from Wofford and Duke and of becoming a Methodist pastor. My family had always been active in the Methodist Church. As a matter of fact, I have always said we had two homes. One was at 30 Gary Street and the other was at the Whitmire Methodist Church. So it was natural to find myself "at home" in the institutional church.

At the end of my first year at Benson Memorial, I was ordained as an Elder and received into full connection of the North Carolina Annual Conference. My ordination was a bit unusual. Most ordinations occur at a meeting of the Annual Conference, but I was ordained at Benson Memorial on June 7, 1970, at 5 p.m. Bishop William R. Cannon, the presiding minister, was assisted by the Rev. Leon Russell, Raleigh District Superintendent. My sponsoring elders were the Rev. N. W. Grant, Chairman of the Program Council of the North Carolina Conference, and the Rev. C. LeGrande Moody, District Superintendent of the Greenwood District of the South Carolina Conference. The scripture lessons were Exodus 3:7-10, and I Peter 2:1-10 and the sermon was delivered by Bishop Cannon. The Chancel choir sang "I'll Walk With God". A reception was given by the Woman's Society of Christian Service.

In August of that same year I was married to Lynette Wechsler in the Duke Chapel. During our pastorate at Benson Memorial, our first son, David, was born. I still remember the shower the church gave us and the song that Ann Jenkins composed for the occasion.

When I came to Benson Memorial I had but one goal and that was to be a pastor. That goal was not clearly defined, rather it was a collection of images, knowledge, experiences and emotions gained through my years as a child growing upon the in Methodist Church and as a student pastor. The most important things the congregation did for me were to help give clarity to my vision of ministry and to lovingly accept me as their pastor.

Reflecting upon those four years, I am reminded that the first sermon I preached at Benson Memorial set the stage for our ministry together. The sermon, "What Do You Have In Your Hand?" raised the question of what we as a congregation and pastor had that we could give in the ministry of Christ at Benson Memorial. I believe that our major accomplishment was to begin to identify the nature of Benson Memorial's ministry and our individual places in that ministry. I was unhappy to hear that the church was locked throughout the week, but was most impressed that every family had a key to the front

doors. Financially, we were a struggling church, but by 1972 we had found a key that opened a new door for use. That year, for the first time, the budget was fully met and we committed ourselves to a three-year plan to pay in full our conference askings. The Council on Ministries was organized in 1968. During 1969, 1970 and 1971 we sought to have each work area and age level active and responsible for a major emphasis. In the pastor's report for the year ending May 1972, I wrote, "For the first time in the history of the church every committee has been active—each has had a major emphasis this year and planned for more activity next year."

During the summer of 1971, we received our first Duke endowment student, Art Allen. Art and his wife, Nancy, worked with us faithfully and were of great assistance in our educational ministry. Their major area of ministry was with the youth. We continued to have very fine endowment students the remainder of my pastorate.

My last pastoral act at Benson Memorial was to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion on June 3, 1973. The sacrament had always been special for me, but it became even more so while I was pastor at Benson Memorial. For three of the four years we celebrated the sacrament the fourth Sunday of each month. My last year, we agreed to try having it less frequently for the year and then decide what we wanted. I have always regretted that decision on my part.

The worship services were the focal point of my ministry at Benson Memorial. I remember changing the order rather frequently. The services were formal but a real effort was made to having them be personal and uplifting. I remember one member asking one time how I could dress so formally, collar and all, and preach so informally. I did not know then and do not to this day, but find both necessary. The congregation was a preacher's dream. They were very much involved in the sermon and most helpful with critical observations. We thought I never would learn not to say "you know" after a sentence. But with your loving care I did. Each year we had Christmas Eve family worship from 6 p.m. until 10:30 or 11 p.m. The first year, between 50 and 75 people attended the 50-minute service, but by my last year we had nearly 100 families participating. I believe that this reflected the growth in the congregation, both in terms of the size and in terms of our spiritual life. Ash Wednesday, Lenten and Holy Week services were also begun and continued throughout my pastorate.

I hope and pray that we made firmer the foundation laid by Bill Sharpe, and built upon by Brian Gentle and Clyde Tucker. The congregation at Benson Memorial was and is a dream come true.

Louise Humphrey, secretary to the Secretary of our Conference in 1969, was probably the first of his new flock to meet Willie Teague at Annual Conference that year. Willie—not yet ordained as a Methodist minister, and attired in the clerical collar which is still characteristic of him—was attempting to be recognized. Louise remembers that she had a strong feeling that the young man might be Benson's next minister, and sure enough, Willie Teague's name was paired with Benson Memorial as the appointments were read.

Willie was born in Newberry, SC, the son of Gilliam and Bertice McCollum Teague. The Teagues reared their four children, Gilliam Jr. (Pete), John, Bertice and Willie in a strict Methodist home. Willie graduated from Whitmire High School, attended Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC, and Duke Divinity School. In 1968 he was assigned to an associate North Carolina Conference appointment, Warren College in the Raleigh District, and was transferred from the South Carolina Conference on June 3, 1969, to accept the assignment at Benson Memorial.

Those closest to Willie describe him as a happy, enthusiastic, joyful person; an unusually sensitive and caring young man who was not ashamed to share his laughter and his tears with his friends, both in private and from the pulpit. The Christmas hymn, "Joy to the World" reminded many people of Willie. It was not unusual for him to preempt the hymn announced in the bulletin (any time of the year) with a spontaneous "Joy to the World" which evoked enthusiastic response, especially when coming unexpectedly.

Tink and Hank Johnson, who welcomed Willie into their home for two weeks while the parsonage was being painted, remember the experience as "like having another son in the house." Genevieve and Legs Johnson were his constant "parents away from home." Willie has continued his friendship with many of the church families throughout the years. In 1973 several of the ladies of the church planned a surprise birthday party for him, and the group shared the unchanging laughter and tears of joy.

Grace Hale's first recollection of Willie was a telephone conversation in July 1969. New to the area, she was searching for a church. Her young son was facing surgery, and her "distress call" was warmly answered by Willie, who promptly visited the home and later the hospital and waited with her through the long hours. The family joined Benson on August 17, during Willie's third month at Benson. The Hales and the Ben Aikens were the first members received into Benson by Willie. Other "firsts" include the wedding of Sandra Leigh Davis (daughter of Violet Davis, charter member) and Jerry Lawrence Wilson (who now resides in Aberdeen) on August 1, 1970; and the infant baptism of Julian Wooten Johnson, Jr., son of MaryJo and Jule Johnson (and first grandson of Legs and Genevieve Johnson) in August 1969.

During the church year 1969-70, while Hank Johnson was Chairman of the Administrative Board, almost all of the "Master Plan" goals set for the church by the Board were realized. Additional parking facilities were nearly completed, 36 members joined the church, a new policy on handling finances was planned and implemented, and restructuring of the organization of the church was begun. A \$3,500 second mortgage on the parsonage was paid off. Willie designed a new bulletin, featuring a cross and flame cover, and a monthly newsletter was begun. A new scout hut was constructed, which bears the following dedication:

"Lodge of the Silver Eagle, Troop 214, Feb. 21, 1970
We dedicate this building to all Scouts of Boy Scout
Troop 214 . . . because we love them."

The Girl Scout program then consisted of one Brownie troop, led by Mary Lott, and a Junior troop which was led by Nancy Miles and Dorothy Weisenberger.

Throughout Willie's ministry, he conducted morning and/or night Bible studies. New members were impressed at being presented a key to the front door of the original sanctuary building, providing access to the chapel anytime. The minister's study and choir room were then immediately behind the original pulpit area. Our volunteer choir director was Anne Jenkins (who has endured since 1968-69), and our volunteer organist was Sylvia Fink. The one choir then consisted of 10 to 12 adult members.

Willie Teague's ordination as Elder took place at a special afternoon service in the original sanctuary on Sunday afternoon, June 7, 1970. The unusual service, followed by a reception at the church, was performed by Bishop Cannon.

The year 1970-71 was a time of great growth. Fred Greger chaired the Administrative Board. For the first time, the Raleigh Board of Missions was paid in full (June 29, 1970) for single figure asking, a longtime church objective. Membership increased by 43.

During that year a meaningful seminar-discussion series was conducted. The theme was "The People Left Behind in Raleigh and North Carolina; Their Needs and the Contemporary Church." Outstanding speakers from NC State University, the NC Agricultural Extension Service, the NC Department of Social Services and the NC Department of Corrections, along with panelists from the congregation, addressed such issues as "Poverty and Hunger", "Welfare Programs and the General Public", "The Prison Inmate and His Potential for Rehabilitation", "Southside Raleigh and the Greater Raleigh Community" and "The Methodist Church and Its Missions Program in the Raleigh Community."

The Stewardship Committee (Charles McAdams, Chairman) appointed a task force to encourage fellowship through neighborhood groups. More work was done on the Boy Scout hut, and the Girl Scouts continued to meet in the sanctuary building. A publication committee was appointed, and a new weekly bulletin was designed. A library fund was established. Visitor cards and ribbons were placed in the pews by the Worship Committee (Shirley Phillips, Chairperson).

In August 1970, Willie was married and brought his bride, the former Lynette (Nettie) Wechsler, to a newly furnished parsonage. The wedding took place in the Duke Chapel, and a reception was held in Durham which was attended by many church members. Upon their arrival at the parsonage, the newlyweds were "pounded". An old custom, a "pounding" is a social hour when congregation members assemble at the parsonage secretly, bringing gifts for the minister and his family--"a pound of this," "a pound of that," and "a pound of the other."

Fred Greger recalls that the biggest, most talked about, and most time-consuming topic that year was the budget. The policy of inviting incoming Administrative Board members to attend the last meeting of the outgoing Administrative Board was begun in order to acquaint the new members with their responsibilities.

Tom Hobgood chaired the Administrative Board during 1971-72. That was a year of concentrated activity in the Council on Ministries (Ed Boone, Chairman). Each of the four work areas completed at least one major emphasis during the year. It was the best year financially yet for Benson Memorial. October and December contributions broke church history records.

The Education Committee (Ethel Boone, Chairperson) was particularly active. For ten summers Art Allen, the summer Associate Minister from Duke Divinity School, and his wife, Nancy, helped Willie with our youth and children's programs. For two years Willie had singlehandedly coordinated the United Methodist Youth Fellowship. In the beginning, some of the young people thought it amusing that "Mr. Teague's" middle name was "Senn" (naturally, they interpreted that as "Sin"). Actually, Senn was Willie's grandmother's maiden name, and also the name of a bachelor uncle who had died about a year before Willie was born... The young people and Willie were very close; he was never too busy, nor was it too late, to lend an ear to their problems.

Under Art Allen's leadership, "Fun Thursday" was initiated. Our first Youth Director, Linda Wingard, also a Duke student, made significant progress working with our youth. A Youth Task Force was organized and the program

expanded; the young folks elected officers, visited other churches, and a permanent meeting place was begun through conversion of the "Brown House" to the "Purple Fish." Cleaning, repairing and furnishing the center were enthusiastically undertaken by both young, old and older. Several changes were tried successfully in the elementary church school, such as restructuring the school year and changing the date of Promotion Sunday.

Quoting from Long-Range Plan 1 (April 1, 1974) prepared by Ed Boone and his committee, "during the period of 1969-73...Highway 70 was transformed into a \$50 million shopping complex alleged to be the largest of its type between Washington, DC, and Atlanta, GA." This created both problems (such as disruption of our driveway) and opportunities (such as participating in a "cooperative ministry in the Mall").

Speaking of Crabtree Mall, the United Methodist Women held their first Christmas Bazaar, which established an ongoing tradition, at Crabtree. The ladies still gather during the fall to "cook up" batches of Martha Gould's and Jeanne Munson's "Methodist Munch" and make "turkey heads" and other crafts. Christmas family services were held on Christmas Eve that year from 7:00-11:00 p.m., with music and scripture readings and prayer at 15-minute intervals.

The Board of Trustees was reactivated, and all church properties were inventoried. Thirteen new members joined Benson Church. Neighborhood "Concern Groups," a result of the work of the task force organized the year before, became active. Four seminars were conducted by the Committee on Missions and Social Concerns (R.A. and Kay Mabry, Chairpersons), as well as a ministry among the aged in the community.

The church roster was revised, and a calendar of events was posted. Planning for a pictorial directory was undertaken. Volunteers staffed the church office two mornings a week. And on April 5, 1972, the first issue of The Benson Beacon in its present form was published. This issue (the beacon lights on a green background) included a message "From the Heart of the Pastor," meeting announcements, committee and financial reports, and "Expressions of Concern and Joy".

During Willie Teague's fourth year at Benson, Hunter Hadley chaired the Administrative Board. This was the year of KEY '73, the theme of which was "Calling our Continent to the Word of God", and which culminated with noon prayer calls from 12 noon - 1 p.m. each day December 25 - January 6.

Boyd Holliday, student from the Duke Divinity School, assisted during the summer.

The first pictorial directory was finally distributed. Refurbishing of the "Purple Fish" was completed, with gas installed and janitor service provided. The United Methodist Women had another Christmas Bazaar, and the Christmas family service was continued. The 10 "Concern Groups" remained active. In answer to a need for welcoming newcomers as well as "oldtimers", church school "greeters" appeared on the scene.

Forty-eight new members joined the church in 1972-73, bringing the total gain in membership during the Willie Teague ministry to 140. The church budget grew from approximately \$22,000 in 1969-70 to \$32,000 in 1972-73. Willie remembers that when he left Benson Memorial for his next appointment, there had never been a funeral conducted in our church building.

Willie was elected Treasurer of the Raleigh Ministerial Association in early 1973, having participated in that organization during his ministry at Benson.

And on February 13, 1974, there was an anxiously awaited "blessed event" in the birth of David Teague. At a surprise baby shower, the Teagues received everything from the necessities...a rocking chair...the not so necessary...stuffed horsey...to advice "to keep plenty of gas in the car."

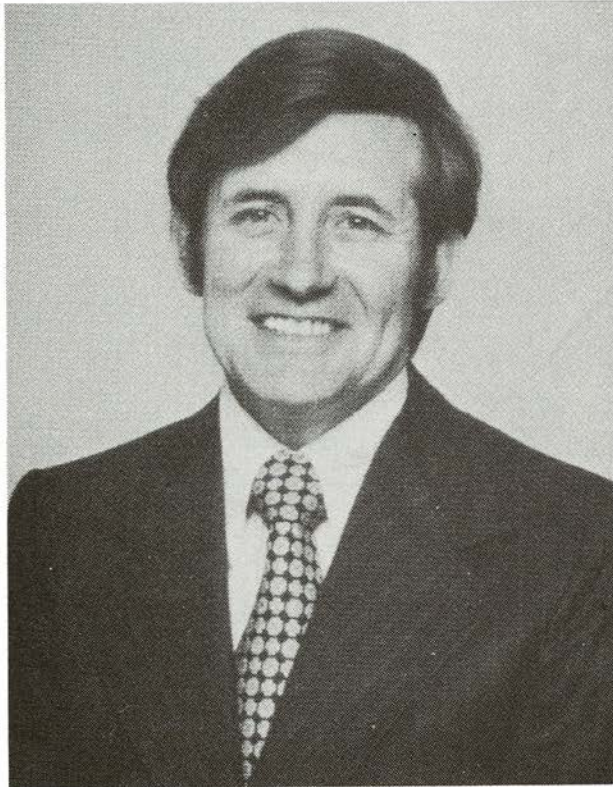
Willie's traditional four years slipped by in a hurry, and on Sunday, May 27, the Teagues were guests at a farewell covered dish family night supper "on the grounds". They were presented with gifts of pewter and all good wishes...

From Benson Memorial, Willie went to Kitty Hawk UMC. Soon after moving the Kitty Hawk sanctuary and educational building were seriously damaged by fire. Except for the Teagues' barking dog, the damage would have been much greater. Next Willie was minister at Mt. Sylvan UMC in Durham (where Benjamin was born on August 17, 1977); then Coordinator of Adult Education for the Methodist Conference in Raleigh. He is presently minister of Mebane First UMC where his positive, sharing ministry continues. At a recent Burlington District UMW "Day Apart" the Christian Advocate reported that "...the most valuable sharing that he did was in the form of a personal testimony of Christ alive and at work in his life."

Willie often quoted Luke 2, 10-11 "Do not be afraid, I have good news for you. There is great joy coming to the whole people. Today in the City of David a Savior has been born to you--the Messiah, the Lord". In a Christmas Beacon, he summed up this passage of scripture..."What joy, what hope it brings to each of us! As we think of this personal message from God to each of us, let us be filled with joy and moved to prayer."



Birth and Growth
of
Benson Memorial United Methodist Church



DR. BRIAN G. GENTLE
Pastor

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

DR. BRIAN G. GENTLE

I came from Melbourne, Australia. I received my education from Wheaton College, BA; BD from Yale; MA from Columbia; and doctorate from Duke.

I served Asbury United Methodist Church of Crestwood, NY, from 1966 to 1969. From 1969-1973, I served Gibson Memorial United Methodist Church of Spring Hope, NC; 1973-1981, Benson Memorial United Church, Raleigh, NC; and, 1981 to present, Epworth United Methodist Church of Durham, NC.

My overall goals were to make Benson Memorial a creative, dynamic, caring, contemporary church. This involved being aware of the needs of both the congregation and the community (Long-Range Planning Phase I and II). Specifically, this included a strong pulpit and worship service, a high-quality church school program, a system of membership care (Neighborhood Groups), and outreach ministries (Alcoholics Anonymous, preschool, Singles Unlimited, repairing homes of the needy, an unemployment center, and youth programs of ecumenical appeal).

My philosophy of ministry centers around a high lay involvement with the professional staff as support persons. This meant the need to broaden the leadership base (from one or two influential people to a more inclusive and broader lay participation) and conscious annual goal setting and planning of ministries. The success of this approach was reflected in the growth of all facets of ministries including the increase of the budget from \$24,000 in 1973 to \$210,000 in 1981, a worship attendance of 120 in 1973 to 450 in 1981, church school attendance of 80 in 1973 to 300 in 1981, and membership from 356 to 951. Also, the erection of a \$500,000 sanctuary and the acquisition of six acres of land for future expansion. It was obvious then that Benson was in the center of an area of rapid population growth and as Christ's church our calling was to be responsible to those opportunities of ministry.

The sanctuary design was intended to emphasize intimacy and openness in worship. The setting in the round achieved this with the open chancel area allowing worshipers to focus attention on the cross on the back wall and the communion table with the open Bible flanked by the pulpit and font. With wood and simple materials giving a feeling of warmth, the high-pitched clerestory above the chancel stresses the "otherness" of a transcendent God in the midst of the worshipping community. The plan was to include the youth education building with the sanctuary and administrative offices (a future goal).

I accomplished the goals set through broad lay participation and identification of capable lay leadership. The strong programs in the church were worship, church school, preschool, Singles Unlimited, evangelism, stewardship and youth ministries.

My ministry confirmed me in the conviction that a caring, creative congregation, which seeks to be sensitive to identifying the needs of the people and designs its ministry around those needs, will be a force for experiencing God's grace in the contemporary world.

June 1973 starts a new church year, and, as is customary in the Methodist Church, we have a change in ministers. Willie Teague was assigned to Duck, NC, and Benson was assigned the minister that had been a Spring Hope Methodist Church, Spring Hope, NC. Ben Aiken, Chairman of the Administrative Board; Ted Reynolds, Chairman of the Staff Relations Committee; and L.H. (Legs) Johnson, then Lay Delegate to the North Carolina Conference, met our new minister, over dinner. The Rev. Brian G. Gentle, to our surprise, had an accent that

we southerners really weren't used to . It came from "way down under". Yes, Brian was born and reared in Australia. We had a delightful dinner and assured Brian we did not expect him to change to the "you all" accent; we were looking forward to his ministry at Benson Memorial United Methodist Church. We also welcomed Brian's wife, Arden, a nurse by profession.

The first thing that had to be done was to upgrade the parsonage and make it comfortable for the new minister and family. A committee headed by Melvin Humphrey handled this.

Brian was ready to get started on plans for the church and requested that a Long-Range Committee explore and develop an overall design for surveying the religious needs of the families in residential areas near the church; explore future population growth trends for the Crabtree Valley area; and establish the geographical boundary of the area to be served by the church.

All new appointments were exciting and to just be with his congregation for three months and have to make the Change Conference Interim Report of the Minister on October 21, 1973, was a great challenge. However, the report was glowing and gave all of us a charge. This new minister after being with us just three months really knew we were on our way and with his leadership the only way to travel was up. "This congregation is blessed with a leadership and membership which is rich in talent and has a relatively high level of Christian commitment. If we will, we can order our priorities so that this church can be one of which we and God can be proud. As I stated to the leaders of Benson Memorial Church who met with me at the North Carolina General Conference last June, I have a professional concept of ministry which emphasizes the commitment to creativity and quality. In this day and age, the Church of Jesus Christ cannot be content with the contentment with mediocrity. With God's grace and guidance, let's pray and work together that Benson Memorial Church's ministry and message might be effective and a source of grace to our membership and our community."

The year 1974 started with great plans: the board accepted a new budget for \$43,277; the Commission of Music and Worship was to explore the plans for a second service of worship; the 10th Anniversary Committee began to make big plans for March 24, 1974, with the first minister of Benson Memorial, the Rev. William Sharpe, as guest speaker. John Phillips and Mary Jane Walton were named as co-chairpersons.

The United Methodist Women gave a new piano to the church to be used for the ministry of music in our sanctuary. All were grateful to the women for their gift and prayed that, as we dedicated it, it might be used for the glory of God and in the service of His Church.

The time travels and so has the church; we had a beautiful 10th Anniversary, March 22-24, and we celebrated with friends and members of the congregation. Our minister expressed it well in his newsletter, "We are now at a historical milestone in the history of Benson Memorial. Yet, we ourselves are history makers. We are at a stage in the life of this church's development, when like those who have gone before, we find God calling us to great faith and great commitment. It is our turn to prepare for those who will one day look back to what we are doing now. In their turn, we pray, they will celebrate the traditions and heritage we have left them. Over the past 10 years, God has blessed this church. In the future He will bless it. However, if we would continue to enjoy His grace and favor, we must be ready to hear His call and heed His command--the command to be His people and His servants in the service of Jesus Christ, to this generation in this place."

10TH ANNIVERSARY

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| FAMILY NIGHT | "Remember our Beginnings" in drama and picture. Our youth are planning the program. | Friday March 22, 1974 7:30 PM |
| FELLOWSHIP NIGHT | ANNIVERSARY BANQUET Bishop Robert M. Blackburn District Superintendent J.W. Page and our former pastors will be with us. | Saturday March 23, 1974 6:30 PM |
| WORSHIP SERVICE | To thank God for his guidance and to commit ourselves to continue spiritual growth. Rev. William Sharpe, our first pastor, will give the sermon. | Sunday March 24, 1974 11:00 AM |

The 10th anniversary celebration was outstanding, and the success was due to the hard work of the committee. The youth did such a grand job they were asked to give another presentation of their musical comedy. The banquet was a memorable experience and we especially thanked Ruth Haws for her birthday cake with the replica of the church. Sunday worship had an attendance of 268 and the service and luncheon was marked by a wonderful spirit of joy and Christian celebration.

As it was noted in the Beacon, yes, miracles still happen--when a group of dedicated people put their minds to a task and carry it out efficiently and with a sense of joy. A beautiful new church sign was erected at our entrance driveway. We thanked Bob and Grace Walker, Sam Johnson, Jerry Stephenson, Melvin and David Humphrey, Arden Gentle and Leonard Dean for their fine efforts in making the sign a reality. We also thanked the United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women for their support in underwriting the cost.

Our Methodist Men did it again. The barbeque was a big success, clearing \$500 toward the goal of \$1,000 for the Raleigh Rescue Mission.

We grew so fast that it was necessary to have two services. On April 7, 1974, we had our first double service; it was a project set up by the Worship Committee. At the 8:45 a.m. service, there were 59 present; at the 11 a.m., 121. It sure helped with the parking problem. How quickly we were outgrowing our sanctuary.

The Administrative Board appointed Mrs. Irene Gattis as our first Director of Christian Education.

After a year at Benson, Brian said, "We are now at the point when we will have to make some decisions that will determine the future directions and scope of service of this congregation. Let us therefore pray for one another, and for ourselves, that we would seek to be Christ's Church in this place now and in the years ahead, we might be a people of faith, courage and hope--a people who will be obedient to the high calling which is ours in Christ Jesus."

As the summer came to a close, the Administrative Board approved the nomination of a Building Committee which supervised and implemented the recommendations of the Feasibility Study for expansions to our church buildings. Also, it approved renting from the North Carolina Conference a mobile unit which would house offices for the minister, director of religious education and church secretary.

Our staff continued to grow, and we welcomed to Benson Henry R. Batten. Henry graduated from UNC-Greensboro (Bachelor of Music in Education); was a member of the American Guild of Organists, and was consecrated a Director of Music by the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church in June 1973.

The Church Conference heard and voted on the Building Committee: Ben Aiken, Chairperson; Tom Hobgood, Vice Chairperson; Cecilia Adams, Secretary; C. W. (Hank) Johnson and LeRoy Jackson, Finance; L.H. (Legs) Johnson Jr. and Irma Altman, Planning; Jim Bohannon and Hunter Hadley, Construction; Patricia Roswell and Pat Day, Interior; Ted Reynolds, Legal Council. The architectural firm of McKimmon, Rogers and Associates was selected to draw the plans for the church building.

The church theme for 1975 was "Called to be a Caring Community". This gave the church an opportunity to demonstrate our verbal professions by cooperating with the City of Raleigh in Project Outreach. What an opportunity for the church to be a part of a caring community!

The new church office opened; after being "together" for so long we now had room for each staff member to have an office, using the former office as a media center and music room.

Out of concern for citizens with problems of underemployment, the church began operating a Center for Social Awareness. The Center was designed to help area unemployed and underemployed persons by: (1) defining available social services; (2) counseling services; (3) job retraining--educational possibilities; (4) job possibilities; (5) helping to structure an organized approach to securing employment. Larry Freeman, Chairman, Work Area on Social Concerns, headed the task force.

Good news from the Building Committee: the Planning Subcommittee, L. H. (Legs) Johnson Jr., Chairman, had given final input to the architect, Bob Rogers, concerning expected needs for the sanctuary, educational facilities and church offices. Ben Aiken, Chairman of the Building Committee, reported that the church had authorized a topographical map and architect's fees. We were on the way.

Together, Benson Memorial United Methodist Church and Trinity United Methodist Church presented a most effective program for Easter: "The Seven Last Words of Christ" by DuBois. The combined chancel choirs of the two churches prepared us for the services to follow--Maundy Thursday Service of Holy Communion, and our beautiful Easter Service.

"Love is a Warm Fuzzy" is a story of contemporary tokens of love and caring. May 4, 1975, was Children's Day, and they asked the question, "What is God like?" In the sermon dramatized by the youth they explained how we share our fuzzies; all of the youth gave fuzzies to members of the congregation; sharing their fuzzy and God's love. It was a very warm, loving service.

On June 8, 1975, the church commissioned Ken Ogle before he went with the North Carolina Conference Summer Work Team to Bolivia. He was presented with a check from the church to cover his expenses. He also received a banner and

fuzzies make by the youth of the church. We were proud to have Ken represent our concern and Christian love for the people he was to visit.

After two years our minister with the accent we have learned to love said, "I am convinced more than ever that this congregation has the potential and talent to be a most effective and creative force in the service of Christ."

The church is very proud of its members: Charles Mercer, elected as a clerical delegate to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church at the North Carolina Annual Conference; Charles McAdams, elected as a lay delegate to the General Conference; Irene Gattis, elected as a lay delegate to the Jurisdictional Conference at Lake Junaluska in July 1976.

Do you belong? It was good to read in the Beacon, "As minister of Benson Memorial, I am grateful for the many members who do belong here--who do take their church vows seriously. I am grateful for their tireless self-giving; their continual willingness to say yes to the work of Christ and his Kingdom; for their demonstration of the sincerity of their Christian commitment." Living up to the vows is the meaning of Christian stewardship.

Our church was saddened by the loss of Kay Mabry, who died on December 1, 1975 at Rex Hospital. Kay and R.A., her husband, had been members for several years and we extended to Kay's family our sincere prayers and concerns.

In the Bicentennial Year of 1976, we hoped that Benson Memorial would "Build a New Spirit" in keeping with the celebration of the 200 years of our freedom-loving country.

Now we know more about Bolivia. Ken Ogle, "Our Man to Bolivia", a part of the North Carolina Work Team, spent time erecting several buildings and lending medical aid to the locals. We were proud to be given an opportunity to become better acquainted and informed about one facet of the life of our church.

March 14, 1976, was an historic occasion in the life of Benson Memorial Church. A meeting of the congregation (Church Conference) approved the recommendation of the Building Committee that we enter a building program which would include the erection of a sanctuary (to seal 300-plus and the choir) with a narthex and lower level (2,500 sq. feet of useable space) with parking and curbing for the new facility. The proposed cost would be \$285,000 (\$240,000 for the "brick and mortar" for the new building, plus \$45,000 needed to retire the present debt on the existing structures.) The annual debt service would be \$30,000. It was hoped that construction would begin in the early fall.

We were all very proud of our choir. The North Carolina Conference honored our Benson Memorial Adult Choir by asking them to present the special music at the Bishop's Convocation on Preaching.

Sure is good to know the church is carrying our the work of Christ. Excerpt of a letter received from Bill and Nancy Bethune, members who moved to Cincinnati, Ohio:

Please express our appreciation to the church for their help as I worked with the children during church hour and those that worked with Bill on his committees. They are a great group of people with a wonderful mission. Bill, David and I thank God we were a small part of this wonderful group, only wish it could have been for a longer time. With the warmth and friendliness in the church, we couldn't help but love

everyone. Thank you for being a part of our lives and, God willing, may we be together again."

We really missed the Bethunes and their service of the church and God.

Sunday, July 4, 1976, was an historic date when the United States celebrated its bicentennial of the gaining of its independence. Special emphasis was made at the 10:00 a.m. worship service: To identify significant elements of how our nation was founded; to determine the evidence of those Christian truths in our nation's development; to offer Christian hope for the continuing growth of our nation; and to celebrate God's grace and forgiveness of our nation's past and present to God's hope and dream for our nation's future. Everyone was invited to dress in keeping with the Bicentennial theme. "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." (Leviticus 25:10). We had an old-fashioned picnic on the grounds after the service and enjoyed the American tradition of fried chicken, baked ham, ham biscuits, potato salad, etc. We celebrated with the ringing of bells and singing of our favorite hymns.

In preparing for the holiday season and the coming year we planned five outstanding programs for the month of December; also, the Administrative Board adopted a 1977 budget of \$75,000. The programs winding up 1976 were "The Hanging of the Greens"; "Christmas Music Program"; "A Birthday Party for Jesus"; "Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion"; and "Christmas Carol Singing".

The year 1977 started well with 105 families pledging to the building fund. The cost was \$315,000 plus 10 percent; we also had to have the roof repaired at a cost of \$20,000; refinancing the present mortgage \$3,000. We were to get a loan approved for \$378,000 at 9-1/2 percent for 25 years. We planned for construction to be completed by March 1978. We have expanded our three preschool classes, with an enrollment of 54 children, and plan to enclose the playground.

The sixth day of March 1966 was an historical one in the church. It had come as the result of long hours of planning, prayer and preparation by members of our Long-Range Planning Committee, chaired by Dr. Ed Boone, and our Building Committee, chaired by Ben Aiken.

We were honored to have Rev. William G. Sharpe preach our sermon. Mrs. Cecilia Adams, Lay leader, turned the first spade of dirt. Rev. Warren Petteway, District Superintendent, assisted in the program. Other members taking part in the program were: Ben Aiken, Chairman of the Building Committee, Robert Walker, Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Lynn Eury, Chairman of the Administrative Board; Miss Trudi Baker, President of the UMYF; and Olivia Sadler, a child.

It seems also that spring brings changes; we were sorry to say farewell to Ken Woodard, who had served the church well as organist. We will miss him. Also, we lost our Director of Christian Education, Irene Gattis. For three years, she helped us with our programs in the church and performed her work in a Christian manner with a great deal of enthusiasm and joy. We wish Irene and her husband, Bill, the best at their new church home. Oh, we almost forgot--Dr. Brian Gentle will be leaving--that's right, for a course in Leadership Development at Princeton University. We will be expecting big things when he returns.

As we have lost good members of the staff, we have been able to bring aboard fine qualified persons to continue the task. Mrs. Ruth Hafley is our new organist, and Mrs. Robin Howlett, our new Director of Christian Education.

The building is on the way and now we have a drive to try and get pledges for the furnishings in the new sanctuary. The drive proving to be a great success, we were able to pledge for the \$18,000 needed.

Many nice things happened during the month, August 1977. Our Director of Christian Education, Mrs. Robin Howlett, was received into the church by profession of faith; Rev. Bob Baldrige was a guest preacher; Dr. Gentle started a new series of Kingdomtide sermons "Parables of the Kingdom"; Dr. Charles Mercer was our guest preacher on Christian Education Sunday; our Creative Arts Festival was a great success, to include a music drama, Greek cuisine, and a sermon on "The Artist and His Religious Experience" (Vincent Van Gogh) by Rev. Steve Shoemaker. We ended up the year with a beautiful Birthday Party for Jesus on Christmas Eve.

"Can 1978 be a New Year?" was the title of Dr. Gentle's sermon on January 1, 1978. It was so popular with everyone, the office had to make extra copies. Brian also presented a Winter Sermon Series entitled "Practical Problems of Christian Faith." By Palm Sunday we had 22 new members. Scott Walker received his God and Country scouting award.

The beautiful new church took shape in a setting surrounded by the beauty of God. And on June 4, 1978, the new sanctuary was consecrated. This was a joyous milestone in the life and history of Benson Memorial Church, and part of the recorded event follows.

The Call to Worship was handled by Dr. Charles Mercer; A Litany of Recollection was presented by our first Minister Rev. William (Bill) Sharpe. The Removal of the Symbols of the Word was conducted by our second minister, Rev. Willie Teague. We started our services in the Old Sanctuary and as the choir, displaying their new robes, sang "The Church's One Foundation" the people moved out and to the front of the new sanctuary. The presentation of the new sanctuary was made by Ben Aiken, Chairman of the Building Committee, who said, "On behalf of the members and friends of Benson Memorial United Methodist Church, it is my privilege to extend to our architects, McKimmon, Rogers, Edward and Associates, and our general contractor, William C. Vick Construction Company, our congratulations and sincere gratitude for conceiving, designing, supervising and erecting this beautiful new house of worship. It is now with great pleasure that I hand the keys to our new sanctuary to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees." Mr. Charles McAdams accepted the keys, saying, "It is a personal pleasure for me to accept this key on behalf of the congregation. May the beauty and usefulness of this building and the loving kindness of our Heavenly Father bring us together under this Divine Spirit. It is now my honor to open our new sanctuary for public worship." With the Trumpet Fanfare the people entered the New Sanctuary and our lay leader, Mrs. Cecilia Adams, led the people with the Presentation of the Symbols of the Word. The Service continued with Mrs. Robin Howlett, Director of Christian Education, having a conversation with the children of the church. The Offertory was "Allelujah" supported by Julia Powell with the flute, Glenn Smith with the piano, and Lynn Lye with the guitar. The sermon, "How Important a Statement" was given by Dr. Brian Gentle. The Anthem of Consecration, "How Lovely is the House of God" was presented by our choir director, Anne Jenkins. The Act of Consecration was given by Rev. Warren Petteway, Superintendent of the Raleigh District, as follows. "In holy reverence, and in confidence that God our Father will accept that which we do in his name, I now declare the newly constructed sanctuary building to be open for the worship of Almighty God. For nurture in the truth of the Holy Scriptures; for Christian teaching, fellowship, and service, we reverently set apart and consecrate this building, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The beautiful service was concluded with the Benediction by Rev. James McCallum. We were very honored with the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Clifton L. Benson and other members of the Benson family; Mr. Bob Rogers and Mr. John Hitch, supervising architects; Mr. William C. Vick and Mr. James F. Vick, the general contractors. All were invited to join members and families of Benson Memorial in the luncheon on the lawn that was held at the conclusion of the Consecration Service. Ushers for the service were John Sheppard, Coordinator; Clay Adams, Bob Boone, Jim Hastings, Vernon Lamm, Michael McKinney, Sam Scott, Robert Surratt, Charles Robertson, Overall Coordinator, Herbert Bickley. Acolytes were Ken Altman, Jeffrey Ray, and Ashley Woodall. A tour was conducted after the service to include an explanation of design concepts, costs and materials used. The tour was conducted by Patricia Roswell and Lehman (Legs) H. Johnson Jr., members of the Building Committee. There was an historical display in the lower level, consisting of a walk-through "scrapbook" which traced the history of Benson Memorial. This display was prepared by Nancy Taylor, Grace Walker, Shirley Phillips, Win Baker and Arden Gentle.

During the summer of 1978 the youth had a good turnout for their weekend at Kerr Lake. Our Vacation Church School was a big success with over 115 children participating.

Plans were made to expand the parking area by 128 spaces, and also because of the growing Sunday School classes, there was a need to divide the lower level into four rooms in include a choir room. A bid of \$27,500 was received for preparing a parking area on the side and rear. This amount came from the building fund (\$15,000), a benefactor (\$12,000) and the youth (\$500).

Many changes were in order. The pews were sold to another church, and the dear old "Purple Fish" (the building used as a classroom and youth center) was moved. With the move, we changed the classrooms and office from the rear of the old building to the rear of the new sanctuary, giving us additional parking space.

Our first Pony Express, the theme being "Committed to Each Other Through Christ," proved to be successful with our pledges up 40 percent. We adopted a budget of \$146,668 for 1979. The Youth Center moved to the lower level of the new sanctuary, and plans were adopted to make the old sanctuary into a Fellowship Hall.

We started the year 1979 by sending \$1,139 to an adopted Laotian family to help them move to this country. Thirty-one leaders of the church attended the Conference Leadership Training Workshop, and 80 parents and youth met together for a "Parents Awareness" evening. Bob Walker made a beautiful lectern for the new sanctuary.

Under the able leadership of Dr. Frank Day, Scout Master, and Mr. Fred Greger, Coordinator of the Scouting Program, our scouting program flourished. Dr. Day and Mr. Greger were awarded the "Silver Beaver Award".

This year the Conference assigned each church their fair share for the Ministers Pension Fund, our share over a period of three years being \$12,170. That we accepted.

Because of our rapid growth we are having two services each Sunday and have added pews in the rear of the sanctuary, also racks for hymnals. We are indebted to Charles McAdams, Ralph Suber, Bob Coggin and Ken Gillette for building the handicap ramp to the office trailer.

Brian left for Australia to visit family and the old landmarks, leaving Arden home to wash the windows, make curtains and clean the trailer for a tip-top office when he returns.

We had a call meeting of the Administrative Board and approved the purchase of a new organ. We had 90 percent of the total cost already pledged.

We had a reception for an "expecting" Robin Howlett, retiring after 2-1/2 years as Program Director, and we all wished her well.

The Retirees organized with 11 at the first meeting; also the Singles Unlimited has 45 at their first meeting. The Preschool program expanded to 88 students with a \$22,000 budget. Another first—"Wonderful Wednesday"—was a great success.

Christmas preparations began with the "Hanging of the Greens". A Christmas pageant was followed by a covered dish supper; Nativity play by the 5th and 6th grade classes; Brian's sermon entitled "What Child Is This?"; and a beautiful birthday party for Jesus. "The Advent Feeling", directed by Bob Andron.

The Charge Conference recommended Tom Hollis, a member of our church, as a candidate for the ordained ministry. Tom had been attending Wake Forest University and preached for us many times.

We were sorry to lose Mrs. Bille Bright as secretary. She performed in an outstanding manner, and we wish her much happiness back home as a wife and mother.

Seems that each year we start out with some new member of our staff, so why should 1980 be any different? We were lucky to get Mrs. Eleanor Dixon as our new secretary. We wish Eleanor many years of joyful service with the church and pastors.

Emphasis for 1980 was "Proclaim the Word", a program to bring in new members. A 4-H Club was organized by Win Baker. A Long Range Task Force was formed to coordinate all programs of the church and determine just where we want to go. Our programs continued to grow, with 20 parents participating in the Drug Action of Wake County workshop.

Welcome aboard to Miss Phyllis Gantz as our new Program Director. We had a reception for her in the Fellowship Hall on April 20, 1980.

The Long Range Planning committee headed by Ed Boone presented their plan to the Administrative Board. They recommended: (a) hiring a fulltime custodian in the fall of 1980; (b) approving a \$5,000 soundproof partition in the old sanctuary for classroom dividers; (c) approving \$2,000 to supplement kitchen appliances; and (d) purchasing land next to the church property and new construction totaling \$1/4 million over the next five years, to be raised in a capital fund drive.

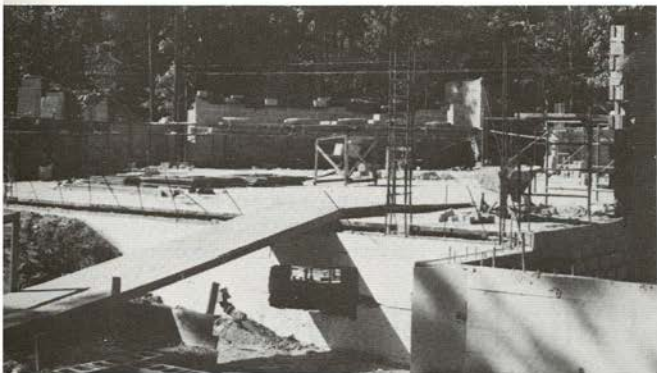
Brian had recommended the land purchase. Even with the addition of pews all across the back of the church, it was being filled to capacity. Such a great feeling to see the church growing with beautiful families. At Church Conference the Trustees were advised to negotiate the purchase of 6.3 acres of land adjacent to the Benson property and facing Highway 50. Another benchmark of progress in the growth and development of this fellowship! Purchase price was \$95,000; \$10,000 was paid for the option, and about \$55,000 was pledged toward the payment.

A result of our missions outreach, a plan was approved by the church to send two members of our congregation to Jamaica to help build a church, share and witness. Those two were Jody Hardman and Susan Brady.

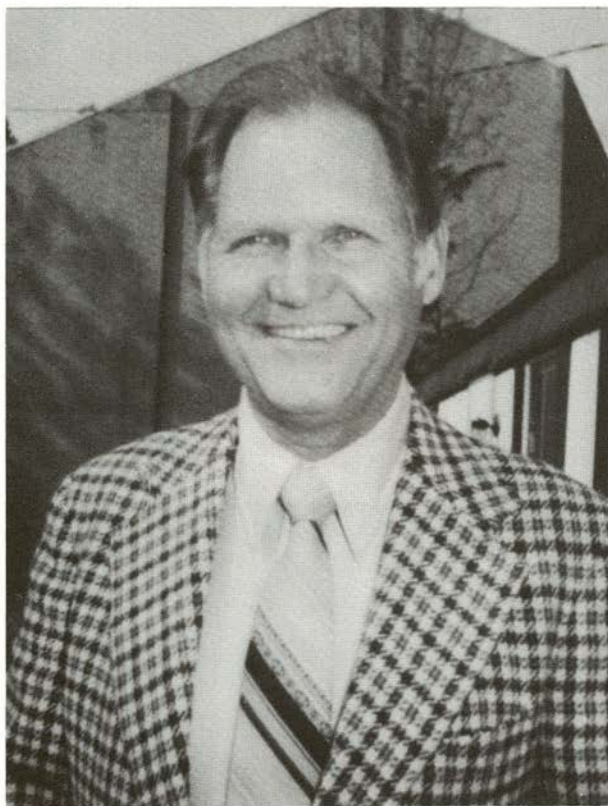
As Brian Gentle's eight-year ministry ended, he and Arden were honored at a reception at which they were given a small expression of our Christian love for them, and our blessings went with them as they accepted their new charge, Epworth Methodist Church in Durham. Brian was an outstanding minister and brought growth, organization and the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his last sermon to us, on June 14, 1981, he left us with a very strong message. The title of the sermon was "We've Only Just Begun!" (Revelation 3:8--"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut.") He left us with a great challenge for the future.

"Thank you for letting me be your pastor the last eight years. Thank you for your love, your support, your faith and all the ways you have surprised me by delivering more than even I expected. And thanks be to God for making all this serendipity possible."

In the Beacon, Brian wrote, "As I leave I know your future is bright. You are a great people. You can do anything you want and commit yourself to. Furthermore, with the succession of ministers, you are beginning to reach a maturity which realizes that the work of Benson Memorial finally belongs to God. Bill Sharpe, Willie Teague, Brian Gentle, Clyde Tucker are simply servants given the privilege to lend support and encouragement, home and challenge, to you who are here. Be God's people! Be God's church! Do not be ashamed to share with others the good news of God's love and grace! Don't be afraid to reach out, to become vulnerable! Don't be afraid to love! For God is love! Thanks be to God!



Birth and Growth
of
Benson Memorial United Methodist Church



C. CLYDE TUCKER
Pastor

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

REV. C. CLYDE TUCKER

Born and reared near Lynchburg, VA. Received B.A. degree from Randolph-Macon College and M. Divinity degree from Duke Divinity School. While at Duke, I met and married Yvonne Herndon of Durham. Served first pastorate of three years in Virginia Conference on the Alexandria District. Volunteered for overseas mission service and together with wife and two children attended two quarters in preparation at Scarritt College, Nashville, TN.

In 1957, we arrived in Chile where we spent 10 years as pastor and District Superintendent of the southern-most Protestant churches in the world on both sides of the Strait of Magellan. During this time, three more children were added to the family.

We returned to the United States in 1968 and joined the North Carolina Conference. I served pastorates at Hope Mills, Longview in Raleigh, and First Church in Elizabeth City prior to coming to Benson Memorial in 1981.

Benson Memorial has proved to be a very challenging appointment. It has its own unique character and set of opportunities. We are located in a strategic place with unlimited possibilities for ministry to a growing population in northwest Raleigh. Therefore, any consideration of our own special ministry and goals must take these factors into account.

My personal goals for Benson Memorial are two-fold. First, to lead the congregation in a continuing search for a more distinctively Christian orientation. We must be above all a Christ-centered church. That does not imply a superficial religiosity. To the contrary, it is an unassuming desire and interest to make Christ's way to the center of our relationships and our decisions in the world. We do that through Sunday School classes, Bible study, church programs and especially in worship. A deepening Christian commitment must be the foundation of the church organization. This should be joyous, accepting, forgiving, growing, caring, serving, giving fellowship.

The second goal follows from the first--to make the church and the Christian life of the member so attractive and compelling that other people will be drawn into its membership. Church growth will thus not take place by promotion and organizational efforts alone (although these are necessary) but by the contagion of lives that are liberated from narrow, self-serving goals on the one hand and strict religiosity and legalism on the other.

Toward that end we are moving, yet never arrive. There are some signs of hope and encouragement. There is more interest and participation in Bible study and a Christ-centered church. We have lost some members but have gained many more. We now stand at just under 1,000. I believe we are now reaching out from a position of strength, built on a firm foundation. While membership growth in numbers alone is not our objective, we should see more net increase in the future.

Part of the strategy for accomplishing these goals is increased responsibility and participation on the part of the laity. In the early years of the church, the minister needed to take a more directive approach. Now it must be the sharing of a sense of mission by minister and laity with the latter assuming more direct responsibility for the total life of the church. Renewed and continuing neighborhood groups is one means to this end. Group leaders can help keep in touch with members, as well as other interested persons, and lead them to a closer relationship with the church.

As new people come to the church, orientation classes by the minister should help lead them to a more solid basis and commitment to church membership. These are proving to be effective.

Our Tuesday evening fellowship meetings are designed to offer a variety of opportunities for growth to all interested persons. Attendance at these has been varied and limited but is of value to those who participate.

Benson Memorial is a vigorous congregation with an active membership and a strong outreach program. When that activity is rooted in the love of Christ, it is meaningful. That should be the basis of all we do.

As a minister I have a particular opportunity as well as responsibility to lead the congregation in fulfilling their ministry. In fact, the minister's effectiveness may be measured by how well lay men and women are prepared to carry out their ministry in the world. This depends upon the laity understanding that we are all in ministry together and that their part is essential to the ongoing life of the church. The ordained minister is then, an enabler to prepare the laity for their mission.

All aspects of our work must move along together since all are interrelated. As we grow numerically, we must provide adequate facilities to meet the needs of an expanding congregation. At the same time, we must offer solid spiritual nourishment to satisfy our deepest needs and thus bring people to the church through Christ our Lord.

Making a change within a church is never easy, however, it was Brian Gentle who set us on the right attitude with his closing sermon. It really got us in the proper frame of mind to receive the Rev. Clyde Tucker and his family (Yvonne, better known to us as Vonnie, Teresa, Thomas, Michael, Eric and Cristina). Sure is good that some of the children were married or out working, or we would have had to enlarge the parsonage.

Clyde reminded us of the trauma that is occurring within the church, and said we must look with great anticipation to the future. "...Benson Memorial is a unique church, as we all know. We appear to be not only at the right place at the right time, but have the human and material resources to take advantage of our situation. Your present program is excellent and it is refreshing to see the creative work that is being done here. I hope this will continue without any interruption. My concern is to go forward in every area of the life of the church."

The summer was the time for the new pastor and the congregation to get to know each other and begin planning for the coming year. Clyde gave us some excellent advice for the summer: Go to church somewhere every Sunday when possible; plan and use your vacation time to bring the family closer together; remember that the work of the church goes on while many members are away. As the summer drew to early fall we had to think that all must begin to plan for our involvement in the church, mainly because it does the church no good to make a commitment and then not use our talents. Also, it does the person no good, we receive according to what we invest. The Apostle Paul put it another way: "Make no mistake about this: God is not to be fooled; a man reaps what he sows."

One of the first things that Clyde had to face was to support the family of Bob and Glenda Graham; they lost their first infant son, Robert Christopher, on September 9, 1981. The congregation joined with Clyde in sharing our love and concern for Bob and Glenda.

We also have so much love and beauty in the church. As one visitor said when he was leaving after a service: "The beauty of the setting of this church is a sermon in itself." It is a beautiful place to worship.

A good example of the strength of desire of the church was the leadership seminar held by our church in the Methodist Building. Twenty-five leaders of the church, in October, 1981, gave their afternoon to be involved in sharpening leadership skills. Clay Taylor helped us set goals and plan how to achieve them. Willie Teague and Phyllis Gantz led us in a series of exercises in group dynamics and leadership styles. Church structure, as it relates to us and our leadership positions, was discussed by Charles McAdams and Charles Woodall. Doug Sutton spoke about resources available to help us in doing our job. We ended the service with communion. Win Baker did a great job planning and Benton Hobgood made many of the arrangements.

On November 1, 1981, we had a special treat. Rev. James McCallum, who was the coordinator of Outreach Ministries for the North Carolina Conference, preached "A New Commandment". (John 13: 34-35) "And so I am giving a new commandment to you now--love each other just as I love you."

The church has many different programs going on during the week. Alden Jones set up an evening course on Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation. Also, we continue with the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service. Temple Beth Or and St. Giles invited all congregations in the Crabtree Valley area to join them in a service of Thanksgiving at Temple Beth Or. Dr. Vaughn, minister at St. Giles, brought the message.

Over 50 members gathered at the church for fellowship and Charge Conference on November 22, 1981. Dr. Reginald Ponder, District Superintendent, gave a thought-provoking message about what the church should be, using a theme from the message to the seven churches in the Revelation of John. Our membership over the past 12 months grew from 849 to 936, an increase of over 10 percent. The minister's report ended the meeting with this paragraph: "In conclusion, Bension Memorial has as much hope and promise as any church I know of. This is an exciting place to be. Possibilities are endless. Lay leadership is outstanding. There is a high degree of commitment and motivation. But all of this will be effective only if it is Christ-centered and grounded in the love of God made incarnate in Jesus. As we move into a new year together, let us remember that this is His church and He wants to lead us. We are not responsible for its success, but we are responsible for being faithful."

Our Christmas service was beautiful and moving. The choir led us in worship through the presentation of excerpts from Handel's "Messiah". There were 124 attending the first service and 412 attending the 11:00 service, and, yes, we did find places for everyone to sit.

During the holiday season, the church received \$1,500 from Pre-School Board Chairman Sid Aldridge, who said, "We are trying to do our part in both supporting the church financially as well as carrying out the church's ministry in the community."

The climax of the holiday season was our Christmas Eve Service of Worship at 11 p.m. After communion, the candles were lit during the singing of the last hymn, "Silent Night, Holy Night".

The first Sunday after Christmas, we were proud to have Thomas Hollis, a member of our congregation, as guest minister. Tom was attending Emory Theological School and was home for the holidays.

At our Council on Ministries and Administrative Board retreat at Camp Chestnut Ridge we identified our major emphases for 1983, choosing Stewardship as our primary mission and Evangelism as our secondary. A great time was had by all; it was especially good to have youth and young adult representatives join in planning for the future of our church.

We did it: Palm Sunday, a time for joy and celebration, was an especially happy day for the Education Committee: 301 attended Sunday School.

We lost our first Charter Member on April 29, 1982. Genevieve W. Johnson died after 18 months of illness with cancer; she was the first historian for the church and held many positions of leadership during the early growth of the church. Your chairman of the committee promised her that the history of the church would be completed before the 20th anniversary. We all miss her love and beauty. Bill Sharpe, Willie Teague and Clyde Tucker conducted the services. Willie said, "Now I know how it is to bury my mother."

The Council of Bishops at its meeting at Lake Junaluska on April 29, 1982, endorsed the Joint Resolution on Nuclear Freeze and Arms Reduction. Many years ago in a radio broadcast from Oslo, Norway, Albert Schweitzer, paraphrasing our Lord, said, "Those who live by the bomb will perish by the bomb." May God spare this planet such a fate by empowering and using each of us. God's kingdom come. God's will be done on earth.

We are growing. In the calendar year 1981, we had the distinction of having the largest net growth in the conference--102 members. We are pleased that this is a church where visitors find a warm welcome and a place to get involved.

Clyde advised us, with a great deal of pleasure, that he would be returning to Benson Memorial as the pastor. He said he was "looking forward to the coming year with its tremendous challenges and opportunities, and certain things are coming into focus as directions in which we should be moving."

Our Social Concerns Work Area has been very strong in the church. Their work has been four groups: The Ark, Raleigh Rescue Mission, the Family Violence Prevention Center, and several of our adopted families. We offer our sympathy, prayers and concern to Henry DePuy on the death of his wife, Mary Bonnar DuPuy, on June 26, 1982. A memorial service was held by Dr. Brian G. Gentle. We will miss Mary; she was an inspiration to us all.

We extend sympathy to Phyllis Gantz, our Program Director, and her family on the death of Phyllis' mother, Mrs. Ada Gantz.

Our program is really growing. We had a record attendance on September 12, 1982, in our Sunday School, of 324. Superintendent Grace Hale's reaction was, "Yay! Keep up the good work."

We shared World Communion Sunday on October 3, 1982. This special service began as an ecumenical movement in 1930, and the United Methodist Church has been involved in the celebration of the day since the mid-60s.

Our Benson congregation joins with the Pre-School Board, staff, and parents in mourning the death of Pat Gibbs, director for five years. Pat made our pre-school program strong and very meaningful for all the children that attended.

Celebration corner: Kate Smith, Helena Steene's sister, honored. The

famous singer, Kate Smith, residing at Chelsea Place in Brookhaven, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Reagan on his trip to Raleigh. Congratulations to Helena for her sister's honor and we are proud she shared in the ceremony.

Benson's first All Saints Service on November 7, 1982, was a beautiful and memorable occasion. On behalf of the congregation, the Worship Committee would like to express its appreciation to L. H. Johnson, Jr., his family and friends for the lovely gifts given in memory of Genevieve Wooten Johnson. To complement our services, Benson now has six silver offering plates, a pair of silver candlesticks, an additional pulpit chair, a flower stand (made by Bob Walker and given by the Hunt-Sharpe Class), and a set of chimes to enrich our music.

With loving appreciation, the church accepted the beautiful pall (made by Louise Humphrey) and given by Louise and Melvin in memory of James Grant and Nellie Humphrey. This pall, used to cover the casket in lieu of a flower spray, will be used only in the sanctuary during a funeral service.

These gifts given in memory of beloved wife, mother and father will enhance our services, but, more importantly, will remind us of those saints who have gone before us and who challenge us daily to live a more Christian life.

We are very proud to have an author in our midst. Henry D. DePuy has written a book published by Vantage Press, Inc. This book, "A Steady Progress for Creation to Christ", is a scholarly achievement that tells the story of a people whose inheritance and endurance helped to shape the history of man. Hank has devoted much of his life in Biblical research, and we are very proud he is a member of our congregation. The book-signing party, sponsored by the church, was a success, and Hank was recognized for his achievement.

The church family shares with Julia Chapman and family deepest sympathy on the death of Bill, Julia's husband and a faithful member of Benson Memorial Church.

The church appreciates the very nice gift donated by the Cliff Benson family to the Organ Fund. This leaves a balance on the instrument of \$2,475.

The congregation shares in the grief of Max and Ellen Gregory and their family in the loss of their daughter, Robin Sue (Robbie) who died on April 21, 1983. Memorial services were held at the church on Monday, April 25, 1983.

Our organ belongs to the church. We are so grateful to Julia Chapman for the most generous and appropriate gift. The gift was in loving memory of Bill Chapman. Bill loved music and was a member of the choir. This gift to complete payment for the organ expresses both his love of music and his church as well as Julia's deep faith and commitment to her Lord and her church.

Clyde has done an excellent job of keeping us informed on the growth and history of church denomination. In the "Benson Beacon" he described our peculiar style of organization as follows: "The United Methodist Church is one of the few "connectional" churches. We share this concept to some degree with the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Catholic churches; we are united by a system of conferences into one structural unit. When you join the United Methodist Church, you join the world church with particular ties to one local congregation.

This also means that while we operate on democratic principals, styled basically on the American system of legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, we are also Episcopal. We have bishops and a Council of Bishops who make up the executive branch. They give leadership to the whole church, much as the minister gives leadership to the local congregation.

A bishop presides over Annual Conference which is the basic connection of local United Methodist churches. The eastern half of our state is the North Carolina Conference. We meet the week of June 5, 1982, at Methodist College. In addition to your minister and program director, two lay delegates, Lehman H. Johnson, Jr. and Mildred Smith, attend. At this session of Annual Conference, delegates were elected to Jurisdictional and General Conferences...

Another important event at Annual Conference is the appointment of ministers. Every minister is appointed each year, either to the same church or to a new assignment. This is done by the Bishop and his cabinet after consultation with the minister and the Staff Relations committees of the churches involved.

The Jamaican team is off! Recently an offering was taken to assist one of our members, Sandy Aliff, who is a member of the Jamaican Work Team. The 12-member team will leave for Manzioneal, Jamaica, on June 25, 1983. We are proud to announce that we received more than enough funds to cover the cost of Sandy's trip. We received \$504 in the special offering and the Junior High UMYF (which Sandy advises) also contributed \$80. This is a great show of Christian love.

Our congratulations and best wishes to Tom Hollis, who is now associate minister at Queen Street United Methodist Church in Kinston. Tom finished his course of study at seminary this summer and completed his course for local pastor's license. Tom and his parents, James and Lorraine, joined Benson in 1974. We are proud that Tom is a product of this church and wish him the best in his ministry at Queen Street.

Jack Shirey, recording secretary for the Charge Conference presided over by our new District Superintendent, the Rev. Tommy Smith, wrote: "Vis Sydnor shared with the Charge Conference his feelings about Benson from the perspective of a new member and his reasons for coming to Benson from a local church of another denomination. With obvious and infectious enthusiasm he cited the warmth and caring of the Benson congregation; the solid pastoral care, preaching, and teaching of the minister; and the potential of service to each other, the community at large, and to our Lord which is so tangible here at Benson."

"I have heard it said many times that the success of a meeting is not dependent on its size but its quality, but never before has this truth been so demonstrated. This was, by far, the most inspiring Charge Conference I have ever attended. The spirit of fellowship was pervasive and the anticipation of a truly meaningful year was tangible and electric."

When that can be said about a Charge Conference, it has to mean that something tremendous is happening at Benson Memorial.

It is good that we have set up All Saints Day to remember those persons of our congregation who have died during the year. We also acknowledge memorial gifts to the church. William Chapman, Robbi Sue Gregory and Robert Lynn Smith IV died during the year 1983. November 6, 1983, was All Saints Day this year; the organ was dedicated and made possible by gifts from: Mr.

Cliff Benson Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Jim Bohannon, Mrs. Julia Chapman, choir members, and various members of the congregation.

The paraments, liturgical colors of white, red, green, and blue were given by L. H. Johnson Jr. in memory of his wife, Genevieve.

The liturgical color purple was given by Mr. and Mrs. Max Gregory in memory of their daughter, Robbi Sue. This is a day that the church will plan for annually.

After weeks of planning and training, November 13, 1983, was the Every Member Visitation day. We planned to visit every member of the church using over 150 members of the church, developing a better understanding of how the church works and the programs planned for the year 1984. The brochure, "Seven Days a Week at Benson", giving information on all activities at the church, was made available to the congregation and used by members of the visiting team. It was prepared by the Education Committee, and designed by JoAnn Hobgood.

We can be proud of the United Methodist Women and Methodist Men. The second annual Benson Barbeque netted \$2,081. The beautiful outcome was the use of \$1,000 to aid in finishing the furnishing the new kitchen.

The Christmas season brings us together to visit friend and thank our Lord for the many blessings He has given us. This Christmas is no different, 585 attended the services to enjoy the beautiful music from our choir--Part I Messiah by George F. Handel. It was a beautiful service within itself.

The North Carolina Conference's loss was our gain. Charles K. McAdams retired on December 31, 1983, as Treasurer/Business Manager, North Carolina Conference. We have been proud that Charles and his family has made Benson their church home and now we will see more of Charles, he is to be our lay leader for the year 1984.

We start 1984 with a new slate of officers in the leadership roles of the church. There was a workshop planned for them to attend to get a better understanding of their positions in the church as they carry out their duties on the Administrative Board. The Council on Ministries will also be meeting to set the goals and dream a bit on the future of the church.

We have come a long way since 1964, when the end-of-the-year membership was 60, as compared to the end-of-the-year 1983 figure of 988 members. It is also well to note that our Sunday School has grown from 94 (1964) to 832 (1983).

To look at other growths in the church, our first budget in 1963 was \$3,500, as compared to our 1984 budget of \$231,503.

The future of this church is great and unlimited. Our minister came across a bit of wisdom which we need to keep in mind:

"There are two days in every week about which we should not worry,
Two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is yesterday with its mistakes and cares,
Its faults and blunders, its aches and pains.
Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control.

All the money in the world cannot bring back yesterday.
We cannot undo a single act we performed.
We cannot erase a single word we said.
Yesterday is gone...

The other day we should not worry about is tomorrow
With its possible adversaries, its burdens,
Its large promise and poor performance.
Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control.
Tomorrow's sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds--
But it will rise.
Until it does, we have no stake in tomorrow for it is as yet unborn...

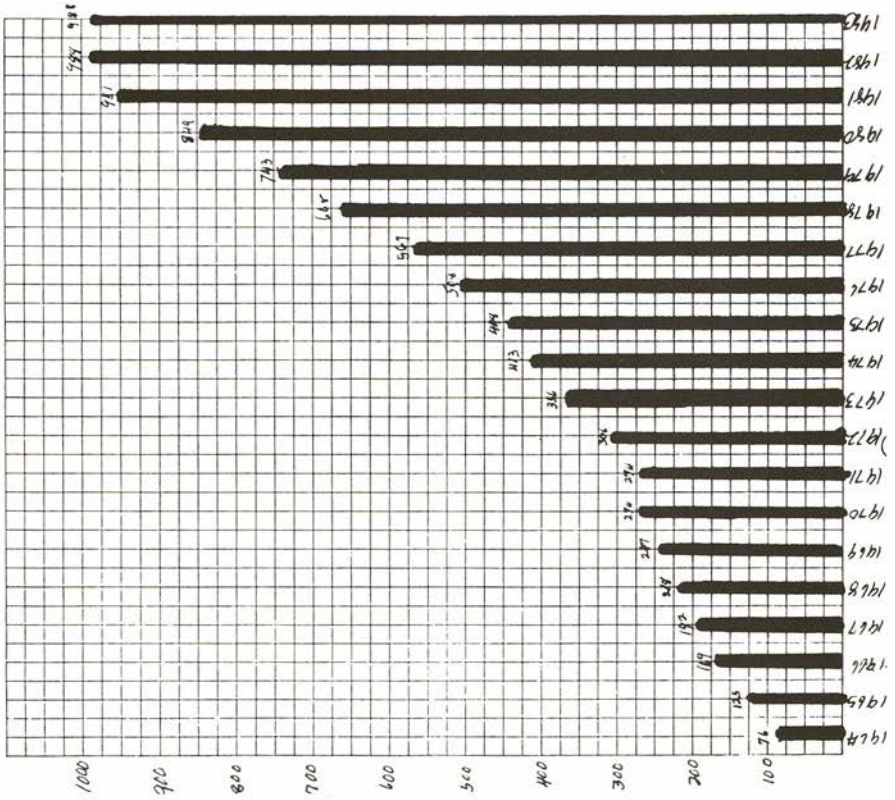
This leaves only one day--today!
Any person can fight the battles for just one day.
It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities--
Yesterday and tomorrow--that we break down.
It is not the experience of today that drives us mad.
It is remorse and bitterness for something which happened yesterday...
And the dread of what tomorrow will bring."

Clyde reminds us after the above that "if we are faithful with what God gives us today, we will have no cause to regret yesterday and we can trust him with tomorrow. How we use the opportunities we now have is all that really matters. As someone put it, "The person who wastes today lamenting yesterday will waste tomorrow lamenting today."

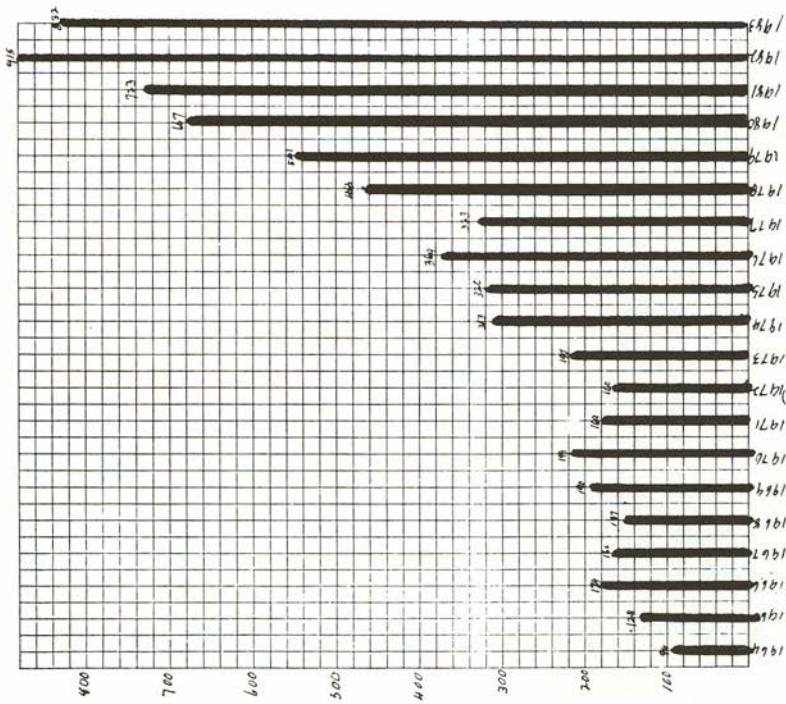
Revelation 3:8, "I know your works, Behold, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut."



End of Year Church Membership



End of Year Church School Membership





BENSON MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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