

A HISTORY
of
CENTENARY UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH

New Bern, N. C.



Written during the Bicentennial In October, 1972
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HISTORY OF CENTENARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The earliest mention of Methodism in New Bern, N. C. was in a letter from the Reverend James Reed, a missionary of the Church of England, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The letter was written June 26, 1760. He wrote:

"There are too many that can hardly be said to be members of any particular Christian society, and a great number of dissenters of all denominations from New England, particularly Anabaptists, Methodists, Quakers, and Presbyterians."

(From Colonial Records of North Carolina, Vol. VI, page 265)

He described the Methodists as "ignorant, censorious, uncharitable."

Reed wrote another letter to the Society on June 21, 1764, reporting on the receipt of books and tracts on various occasions, commenting, "For tho' the heat of the Methodists be considerably abated, yet the distribution of such tracts will be of great service."

The historian Grissom thinks he could not possibly have referred to the real Methodists as the adjectives do not fit. But more bitter words were being at that time hurled against the followers of John Wesley by Mr. Reed's colleagues in England. Moreover it is to be supposed that there were Methodists in that day of whom these words make a fair description. However, Mr. Reed later tells of a visit of George Whitefield to New Bern, N. C. and quotes Mr. Whitefield as saying that the Methodists previously referred to were not regular Methodists, as none were Methodists who did not follow either himself or Mr. Wesley. It is supposed that these dissenters referred to by Mr. Reed as "ignorant, censorious, and uncharitable" were a sect called "New Lights" and not real Methodists.

The first regular Methodist preacher came to New Bern in the closing days of 1772. The Reverend Joseph

Pilmore, on a southern journey from Philadelphia to Savannah, spent several days in New Bern. Joseph Pilmore and Richard Boardman were the first British Methodist preachers to volunteer for work in America.

At the age of 16 Pilmore had become acquainted with John Wesley and was converted under his influence. He was educated at Kingswood School, established by Wesley, and has been spoken of as "the most educated of Wesley's early missionaries." At the Methodist Conference which met in Manchester on August 20, 1765, Pilmore was admitted on trial and into full membership at the conference which met in Leeds on August 12, 1766. The intense spiritual devotion of Pilmore, which characterized his entire life and ministry, was early dramatized in the covenant he made with God at Pembroke, Wales, in 1768. This covenant was three-fold: to devote his soul, his body, and his time and talent to God.

At the Methodist Conference which met in Bristol on August 16, 1768, Mr. Wesley presented the matter of sending preachers to America. Definite action was postponed for one year. During the ensuing year, Pilmore was increasingly impressed by the proposal which Mr. Wesley had made. He tells in his Journal how he considered and reconsidered the matter repeatedly:

"I was frequently under great exercise of mind respecting the dear Americans and found a willingness to sacrifice everything for their sakes . . . A sense of duty so affected my mind, and my heart was drawn out with such longing desires for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom that I was made perfectly willing to forsake my kindred and native land, with all that was most near and dear to me on earth that I might spread abroad the honors of His glorious Name."

At the Methodist Conference which met in Leeds, August 1-4, 1769, Joseph Pilmore and Richard Boardman volunteered to go to America to assist the Methodists already there and to extend the work. An offer-

ing of 70 pounds was taken at the Conference. 20 pounds were for the passages of Pilmore and Boardman and 50 pounds were to be applied to the debt of the New York Society, which had constructed a church edifice on John Street in New York City. It is interesting to note that it cost British Methodism only \$100 to establish its spiritual presence in the New World.

John Wesley was well pleased with the appointment of Pilmore and Boardman as his first missionaries to America. He declared that "Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore were men well reported of by all, and we believe, fully qualified for the work."

Shortly after volunteering to go to America, Pilmore experienced a severe soul struggle. He writes:

"Of all the temptations I had ever met with, this was by far the sharpest, my whole soul was filled with anguish--the deep waters went over me, and the enemy ready to triumph. In this distress I called upon God . . . He graciously condescended to hear my voice and sent me help from His holy habitation."

Before leaving for the New World, Pilmore and Boardman travelled together to London, where they counselled with John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield.

On August 21, 1769, Pilmore and Boardman left England on the ship, "Mary and Elizabeth." The voyage across the Atlantic Ocean took nine weeks. In his Journal Pilmore states that on October 21, 1769, he and Boardman landed at Gloucester Point, N. J., opposite Philadelphia. They crossed the Delaware River from New Jersey to Pennsylvania by ferry and then walked the six miles to Philadelphia. Original plans seem to have been to take a stage coach at once to New York to visit the Methodists there. But the Methodists in Philadelphia were expecting them. They soon decided on a plan for pastoral oversight for the Methodist Societies in Philadelphia and New York. Pilmore was to remain with the Methodists in Philadelphia. Boardman was to go on to New York

City. They agreed to exchange places every four months.

In 1772 Boardman and Pilmore discussed plans to perform evangelistic duties outside of the Middle Colonies. While Boardman decided to go north, Pilmore made plans to go south, and left Philadelphia on May 26, 1772 on his journey which was to take him as far south as Savannah, Georgia.

In December 1772, Pilmore journeyed into North Carolina. As he traveled there he became aware of the unparalleled opportunities open to the Christian evangelist in these places. He did not find a minister in the first five counties through which he passed. He visited Edenton, New Bern, and Wilmington, with an excellent, but brief ministry in each of these places.

Dr. Frederick E. Maser, in his DRAMATIC STORY OF AMERICAN METHODISM, says that the importance of Joseph Pilmore's southern journey for Methodism in America cannot be overestimated:

"First he gave the Methodist people in America a sense of oneness with all Methodists everywhere . . . Second, his brotherly manner and able preaching he made many friends for Methodism . . . Third, he formed a number of societies . . . and he carried Methodism into areas which it had not hitherto penetrated."

Had it not been for the travels of Pilmore, and later Asbury, Methodist Societies might have become independent churches rather than a part of the great Methodist connectional system.

Pilmore reached New Bern on Thursday, December 24, 1772. He writes in his JOURNAL:

"Rose pretty early, and hastening forward through the woods, and after considerable difficulties on the road, about seven

o'clock at night I got safe to Newburn. This has been about the most trying day I have had since I left Norfolk, but it is now over, and the pain of it will soon be forgotten. I should like well to have a little rest, but I must go forward through weariness and pain--through evil report and good report till my race of life and race of shame is run. Then my soul will be (at) rest."

On Christmas Day Pilmore went to Communion at the Anglican Church. Then he writes:

"In the afternoon I sent for a man that I had been told was a hearer of the Methodists when in London, and desired him to apply the Court-house which was readily granted, and I sent a person about the Town to inform the inhabitants that I should preach at six o'clock in the evening. At the time appointed I went to the Court-house and had the genteelest congregation I have seen since I left Philadelphia. Several of them invited me to their houses, and behaved with the utmost politeness and civility. Mr. William Wood took me home with him, and I had everything that my heart could desire."

The courthouse in which Pilmore preached was probably located on the northeast corner of Broad and Middle Streets.

Mr. Pilmore liked Newburn and its people very much, as the following excerpts from his JOURNAL will testify.

"Sat: 26. I had the honour of dining with Mr. Edwards, Secretary to the Governor (Josiah Martin), where I was treated with the highest respect; & in the evening, most of the genteel people in the Town attended the preaching, and all behaved as if they had long professed the Gospel! How different this, from the behaviour of the people in

many parts of England: THERE, many of the genteel people despise all SERIOUS religion-- HERE, they honour and esteem it.

Sun: 27. Breakfasted with Coll. Cogdel, where everything was conducted in a truly genteel and Xtian manner; dined with Mrs. Smith, a gentlewoman who is a friend to religion, and in the afternoon, had a very large congregation in the Court-house, and God gave me great freedom of mind to declare His whole counsel, and preach the Gospel to all without respect of persons. Afterwards two gentlemen waited on me at my lodgings, and we spent the evening together in the greatest harmony and delight.

Mon: 28. Breakfasted with Mr. Ellis, a merchant, in Newburn where I had much agreeable conversation, and was exceedingly happy. At night we had the house crowded indeed, and the people were all attention while I explained and enforced the words of our Lord, "Be ye therefore ready", and the word had free course, and wrought effectually upon the minds of the people. Spent the rest of the evening with a Baptist Preacher, and concluded the day in praise and prayer.

Tues: 29. ...At night, I had the Court-house full again, and it was one of the stillest and most solemn congregations I ever preached to in Europe or America! Thus far the Lord has helped me, and I'll steadfastly trust him for all thats to come.

Wed: 30. Dined with Mr. Cornell, where I met with the greatest hospitality and respect; at six in the evening, a great multitude attended to hear my last sermon for the present, and it was a time that will not soon be forgotten. My mind was quite at liberty, my heart was happy, and preaching was a delightful task, therefore I enlarged more than usual, and though we had most of the genteel people of the Town, I did

not behold one trifler among them! In all my travels through the world, I have met with none like the people of Newburn! Instead of going to Balls and Assemblies as people of fashion in general do, especially at this season of the year, they came driving in their coaches to hear the word of the Lord, and wait upon God in his ordinances! And their behaviour at the last was such as I cannot pass over in silence without the greatest ingratitude. The morning I was to leave the Town two Gentlemen waited on me, and delivered me a Letter, in which several small Bills of North Carolina money were inclosed, which the Gentlemen had subscribed among themselves, and sent me as a token of their love and respect. Thus the Lord prepares my way before me, and all my wants are well supplied. I set off on this journey trusting in Providence alone, and hitherto I have wanted nothing. O may I ever trust in God, and steadily follow the Great Captain of my Salvation till my weary pilgrimage is past, and then praise him in the heaven of heavens for evermore."

After reaching the southern terminus of his journey in Savannah, Pilmore began to make his way back to Philadelphia, following the same route. He arrived back in New Bern on Tuesday, March 30, 1773. He preached that night, Wednesday morning, and Wednesday evening. He wrote:

"At seven in the evening the Court-house was sufficiently full, people (of) fashion in this town think it is a privilege to hear the Gospel, and behave in the most honourable manner. After preaching, I thought it my duty to acknowledge the civility and kindness I have met with among them, and we parted in the utmost harmony and love. My heart was affected at the thoughts of leaving them, but I hope we shall hereafter meet at the right hand of God where sorrow & pain are no more."

From the time of Pilmore's visit to New Bern in 1772, a few Methodists met together at some convenient place and worshiped God according to the usages of that denomination. Circuit riders visited the society. Traveling without guides, and often at night, through the wilds of colonial eastern Carolina, early ministers of the Methodist faith whose duty was evangelism rather than ministering to an assigned charge, found New Bern a welcome stopping point. Not until 1802 was a regular organization formed and a church building erected. A lot was secured on Hancock Street (now the corner of Hancock Street and Church Alley) and a very plain building erected, which was called Andrew's Chapel. A preacher was sent each year from the North Carolina Conference. This was the second church building erected in New Bern, only one, the Episcopal Church, antedating it. Some idea of what the church building was like can be gained from Stephen Chester, a Presbyterian, who wrote a humorous poem about the churches for a New Year's address, January 2, 1819, as printed in the Carolina Centinel here:

"Next comes a house without a name
To that of church it has no claim,
And yet the long misshapen pile
Contains a throng 'twixt either aisle,
And in the galleries perch'd above,
To join in prayer and feasts of love;
Its various worshipers can tell
Why they reject a spire or bell."

Between 1785 and 1807 Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat of the Methodist Church preached in New Bern at different times. Francis Asbury was in the city 14 times. During his 1796 visit, he wrote in his Journal in December:

"This is a growing place. Our Society here, of white and colored members, consists of 100. Should piety, health, and trade attend New Bern, it will be a very capital place in half a century from this."

Six years later, in 1802, when he visited New Bern, he found that his expectations had become a reality:

"I concluded each meeting with prayer. We were crowded every night. I judged it needful to make some temporal and spiritual arrangements for the society in New Bern--that a traveling preacher should attend every Sabbath is one. New Bern is a trading and growing town; there is seven hundred or a thousand houses already built, and the number is yearly increasing by less or more additions; among which are some respectable brick edifices; the new court house, truly so, neat and elegant; another frame house, said to be designed for the Masonic or theatrical gentlemen, it might make a most excellent church. The population of the town, citizens, and transient persons, may amount to three thousand five hundred or four thousand souls."

It is reported that on this visit Bishop Asbury was so feeble that he had to sit while he delivered his sermon in Andrew's Chapel. On previous visits he had held services at the Episcopal Church.

The historian Grissom records that in the year 1799 Methodism suffered the loss of its leader in New Bern. William Early, a very valuable man, died after a few days' illness with yellow fever. He came down with yellow fever while serving in New Bern, and he wanted to go out on the circuit to preach at a circuit church. They told him that he must not go, lest he die. He said, "I must go." And they put him in a cart and took him out, and some seven or eight miles outside of New Bern, they had to take him into a log cabin, and there he died. Full of zeal, powerful, earnest, a successful preacher, William Early was called, "honored instrument in the salvation of many souls."

The Reverend Loranzo Dow preached in Andrew's

Chapel in 1804 and announced suprisingly that he would return for another service there at noon exactly two years from that time. Many local bets were made as to whether he would keep this strange engagement. At the appointed time a huge assembly gathered in the chapel, but there was no sign of Dow. Suddenly, just as the hour struck, he appeared in the pulpit. The congregation was thrown into a frenzy of excitement, as he announced his text: "Be not afraid, it is I." He had arrived in town the night before, in disguise, and had kept hidden until noon. (from Historical Notes, by John D. Whitford.)

An interesting incident took place in February 1813, when the War of 1812 was at its height. The Virginia Methodist Conference was then taking place in New Bern. The illustrious Rev. Jesse Lee, a prominent Virginia Methodist minister who was a close associate of Bishop Asbury, preached a sermon during the conference which got some very unusual results. His text was Acts 17:6: "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither, also." His points were that when God made the world he placed it right side up; when sin was introduced into the world, it turned things upside down; therefore, it is the business of the ministry to turn it back to its rightful position. The next morning people awakened in New Bern to find the town in all of its parts a laughable spectacle of things "turned upside down." Carriages and all kinds of vehicles were bottom-side up. Boats drawn from the water were lying about, keels uppermost. Small houses were upturned; signs, boxes, and gates were wrong-end foremost, upside down, and, in a word, everything was out of fix, and the whole town was one scene of wild confusion. The pranksters who had done it all attributed it all to the preachers who were at the conference, saying, "Didn't the preachers say that they were the men who "turned the world upside down, and had they not come to put the town rightside up?" This was no doubt a literal interpretation never intended by the Rev. Jesse Lee, but New Bern was a long time forgetting the incident. (from article by Dallas Mallison in the "N. C. Christian Advocate", May 31, 1956)

Miss Gertrude Carraway in Crown of Life (page 133) states that an article written in 1818 reports: "The Methodists, the most numerous society of Christians in the place, have a very large and convenient chapel, and are supplied with a regular succession of able and evangelical preachers."

The Reverend Amos C. Treadwell, pastor of Andrew's Chapel in 1821, declared in one of his sermons:

"I had rather be a poor Methodist preacher, traveling over the barren hills of Carolina, receiving my one hundred dollars a year, than to be a Prince seated on his throne."

However, at the next Conference he withdrew from the Methodists and became an Episcopal minister. (from "Recollections of New Bern Fifty Years Ago", by Stephen F. Miller, 1874-75).

The Reverend Christopher Thomas was pastor of Andrew's Chapel in 1829. An interesting story is told about his remarkable dream and death. "It was at New Bern in November 1829 that Christopher Thomas died, while serving this charge, he being sent there from the conference held at Lynchburg, Virginia in the early part of that year. Under his ministry, during the summer of this year, there was a great revival of religion, which did not only spread through the town, but went like a tidal wave down the Neuse to the seashore, the whole country being deluged by its generous overflow. Soon thereafter Thomas was taken sick and died a triumphant death. It was said that on his way to conference at a farm house near Lynchburg, where he spent the night with two other preachers, he had a remarkable dream in which all of his experiences during the year, including the events of the conference, the revival, and his death were revealed to him. Just before he breathed his last he said, 'They come, they come,' and immediately the whole room was filled with a light as bright as the noon-day, though it was

in the late hours of the night, and the only light otherwise being a candle in the fireplace. When the strange light disappeared he was dead." (New Bern "Sun-Journal," Nov. 19, 1936)

The number of members of Andrew's Chapel grew steadily. One of the most telling revivals was conducted by the Reverend John Edwards, pastor of the church 1841-42, aided by Dr. Charles P. Deems, then quite a young man sent out in the interest of the Bible and Tract Society. Happening in New Bern just at this time, he proved a most valuable assistant to Mr. Edwards. It was said that he preached twenty nights in succession, drawing large crowds by his eloquent and attractive presentation of the Gospel. Among the number attending were some very prominent people from other churches who afterwards became members of the Methodist Church. As a result of this revival, the number of members increased so rapidly that it became necessary to build a larger church.

A lot was secured on the south side of New Street (now 511 New Street), upon which a church was built in 1843-44. The name "Centenary" was given the church at this time. The name must have come from a religious re-awakening connected with the Centenary of Methodism in 1838. This new church was much larger than Andrew's Chapel. It is reported that on the walls of the church were the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. A bell, which rang from the steeple of this church from 1843-44 to 1904, has been restored during the 1972 Bicentennial Celebration and is once again in use. The bell was taken from the belfry by Jim Blades, a member of the church, when the church building was sold to J. A. Jones as a storage warehouse for cotton. Mr. Blades had it placed in a church erected near his mill company in Bridgeton for his Negro employees. When the Bridgeton church was torn down to make way for a change in the highway, the bell moved to the yards of several different persons, until during the late 1960's it was returned to Centenary Church.

It must be borne in mind that the early Methodists were almost as plainly severe in their dress and manners as the Quakers. A good illustration of this attitude toward dress is the following story: When the Reverend N. H. D. Wilson pastor of the church in 1852-53, (father of N. H. D. Wilson who was pastor of the church in 1925-29) brought his nineteen-year-old bride to this church, she was worldly enough to have a flower in her bonnet. Horror and consternation reigned in the congregation.

The Reverend Charles P. Deems, who had served the church in 1849-50, was appointed Presiding Elder of the New Bern District in December of 1862 and was successively so appointed in 1863 and 1864. The surrender of the Confederate forces threw the whole district in the Federal lines. Dr. Deems promptly visited the station in May, 1865. On June 24, a meeting of the male members of the church was held at the home of the Reverend J. A. Suydam, a local preacher, and a quarterly conference was held in an informal manner. The Reverend Dr. Deems appointed Mr. Suydam secretary. The regular business of the quarterly conference could not be conducted, but the presiding elder appointed Mr. Suydam to be the pastor until the next session of the annual conference. The pastor was directed to make a list of the scattered church members, appoint a Sunday School superintendent and Sunday School teachers; in fact, to reorganize the whole church. After this reorganization the church started on a new era of prosperity and success. (from New Bern "Sun-Journal", November 19, 1936)

The (Masonic) Theatre was lent free to the "Neuse Street Methodist Episcopal Church South" while their church was being repaired in 1884. Thanks of the church was conveyed to the lodge in a letter which was ordered spread upon the minutes. (From Years of Light, page 158, by Gertrude S. Carraway.)

Several excerpts from pastors' reports to quarterly conferences indicate that the state of the church differed little from the present time. In 1891, the pastor wrote:

"The spiritual condition of the membership we think is good and yet there is a falling off of attendance upon public worship and the prayer meetings. We account for this in several ways: 'First the weather and sickness has had a good deal to do with it, and besides, there is always a falling off in the summer months'....The school is in reasonably good condition, but there is a lack of teachers, and the question is: 'How to supply this want?' Our hope rests in the membership of the church, and we both hope and trust that they will wake up to a sense of their duty, and speedily supply the demand."

In this same year, the pastor made the following interesting comment:

"Our members generally are a hard working people, and a good many have been sadly afflicted, which no doubt accounts in a measurable degree for their absence from church. The congregation is variable. Sometimes pretty good, and then again rather slim. The membership we believe are sound in doctrine, and practice; we have therefore no card playing, dancing, or dram drinking; for all of which the Lord be praised."

In 1892 and 1893, reports indicated that the use of the blackboard for teaching was a fairly new and most interesting procedure:

"...Blackboard exercises have been introduced and Brother Bull who does the work and gives the lectures manifests a great fitness for the work and his lectures on

it are very interesting....When the special service on the blackboard lectures comes on and the whole school assembles their attention is closely given and all seem to take great interest in the review of the lesson as made so plain on the blackboard. The great utility of such an exercise on the blackboard is that the lesson is conveyed to the mind through two of the senses, the eye as well as the ear...."

On August 25, 1892, the pastor reported an attempt to extend the influence of the church in another part of the city:

"A large number of persons in the South West part of the city have not been able to be got to the churches, so we felt it to be our duty to hold an open air meeting on Sunday afternoons at 5-1/4 o'clock lasting one hour. Some have been converted under this influence for membership in our church. The attendance was so great that there was necessity for a building to attract and make the service more agreeable. So near 800 feet of lumber was given me on personal application and near enough money was raised to build and near pay for it. 50 feet by 30 feet. Last Sunday we held our first meeting in it, and Professor Adams who was there gave us encouragement when he said it was one of the most enjoyable meetings he ever attended. So did Brother Green and others who were filled with Holy Ghost powers. A Sunday School will be organized there next Sunday, at an hour that will not conflict with any at any other church in which it is hoped children will be gathered who go to no other school."

On February 23, 1894 the pastor reports:

"The general state of the church is good in the main. There are existing circumstances, and have been for some year or more, that have hindered the pros-

perity of the church very materially. We hope, however, that this state of affairs is nearing an amicable settlement and that soon peace and harmony shall prevail throughout the whole church, as through this lack of brotherly love and division, the church can never put on her beautiful garments and walk with the Lord in white . . . while we have something to fear, we have much to encourage us--so we thank God and take courage--looking for the best things to come."

The church on New Street grew, and after worshipping here for sixty years, the congregation decided to build again in a more desirable location a larger house of worship.

The church owned a parsonage located at the corner of New and Middle Streets, so it was decided to buy the lot next to it on Middle Street and build a larger church, as the growing congregation recognized the need of a Sunday School, and in order to meet the needs for a better program of religious education, it was necessary to have a larger building. The church was completed in 1904 and dedicated in 1905, the largest church building in a wide section of eastern North Carolina. Architects were Charles Granville Jones of New York City and Herbert Woodley Simpson of New Bern. Beautiful stained glass windows, made in Germany, were installed when the church was built, and are valued today at about \$30,000 each. The church has recently been nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in America.

Centenary Sunday School was the first in the North Carolina Conference to be organized into departments in order to meet more adequately the needs of all age groups. This was done in 1920. The first known superintendent of the Sunday School was W. M. Closs.

Centenary Church was to be host to the Centennial Session of the North Carolina Conference

in November 1936. Tragedy struck the church on September 15, when late at night a fire broke out and made such headway before it was discovered that the entire roof over the sanctuary collapsed. Catholic sisters, who lived across New Street from the church had been inspired by the beautiful stained glass windows and stood on the sidewalk, praying that they might be spared. When the roof collapsed and the fire was extinguished, windows were unharmed. Damage was approximately \$25,000. Some thought the conference could not possibly be held at Centenary in November after such devastation. But a few courageous souls believed it could be done--and it was. Materials were ordered from California to repair the church, everything inside the church was reworked, including the furnishings, and the church emerged in better condition than before the fire, and the conference met in New Bern as scheduled in November, 1936.

Ten times now the North Carolina Conference has met in New Bern: in 1840, 1846, 1858, 1869, 1888, 1907, 1921, 1936, and 1957.

The Sunday School outgrew the facilities built in 1904, so plans were made for the building of an adequate educational building. The building was designed by Raymond Fuson, a New Bern architect and member of the church. The building was completed in the winter of 1957, during the pastorate of the Reverend John A. Russell, at a cost of \$191,615.97. The building was named the John A. Russell Educational Building, in honor of the pastor who led the congregation through the building program. An oil portrait of Mr. Russell hangs in the main entrance to the building. Final payment on the educational building indebtedness was made on October 1, 1962, and the building was dedicated by Bishop Paul N. Garber on March 17, 1963. In 1966, the church again realized a need to provide better facilities, so a major renovation was undertaken during the pastorate of the Reverend Albert F. Fisher, at a cost of \$250,000. This renovation was primarily in the sanctuary portion of the church plant. Architects for the renovation were Harold E. Wagoner and Associates, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Robert H. Stephens and Aldo B. Cardelli, New Bern.

In October 1972, Centenary United Methodist Church has celebrated its bicentennial. The month of October was designated for the celebration, which began on October 1 with the observance of World Communion, the dedication of a restored church bell (used in the church on New Street from 1844-1904), and a youth-sponsored birthday party in the basement following the communion service. October 8 was "Heritage Sunday" with the present pastor, the Reverend James H. Miller, Jr., speaking on the church's 200 year history. October 15 marked the beginning of a two-day "Bicentennial Preaching Mission" with Dr. A. Purnell Bailey of Washington, D. C., as guest minister. October 22 was designated "Our Musical Heritage" Sunday, with a special musical service presented by the minister and four choirs led by Mrs. Floyd Johnson, Director of Music. At the evening service on October 22, Dr. William K. Quick, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Durham, N. C., N. C. Conference Historian and Chairman of the Francis Asbury Bicentennial for the United Methodist Church in 1971, spoke on Francis Asbury, with particular emphasis on his 14 visits to New Bern. Climax of the month-long celebration came on October 29, when Bishop Robert M. Blackburn, episcopal leader for the Raleigh Area, preached. The Reverend Charles H. Mercer, New Bern District Superintendent, eight former pastors, and one who entered the ministry from the congregation, participated in the service. Following the morning service, youth of the church buried a time capsule on the lawn, containing significant materials from the bicentennial celebration. A covered dish dinner in the church basement concluded the month's celebration.

Centenary Church had its beginning with the visit to New Bern by the Reverend Joseph Pilmore in December, 1772. Since that time, it has progressed from the meeting of a Methodist Society in homes, to the small chapel on Hancock Street, to the larger church on New Street, to the present church on the corner of Middle and New Streets. It has been served during these years by 89 different pastors. It has a current membership of 1344, and church property valued at \$1,092,000.00.

Two hundred years of a wonderful religious heritage is well expressed in the "Bicentennial Hymn", words and music of which were written by a member of the church, Mrs. L. H. Erdman:

"THE BICENTENNIAL HYMN"

Oh Lord, we come in grateful praise,
A special hymn to Thee we raise
In recognition of the year
That Methodism started here.

Two hundred years to seek Thy will.
A thousand glories to fulfill.
One mission ours, within the span:
To be but servants in Thy plan.

We gather in this holy place,
Our souls unburden to Thy grace.
Our hearts are full as we proclaim
The glory of Thy holy name.

For all who were and are to be
We raise our voices now to Thee.
The years may come, the years may go,
The best is yet to be, we know. Amen.

PASTORS

1800	Benjamin Mathews	1815	R. Griffith
1801	Christopher Mooring	1816	Menton Thrift
1802	Samuel Rishter	1817	F. Harris
1803	Thomas Mann	1818-19	John T. Brame
1804	John Somerwell	1820	J. T. Wright
1805	William Hubbard	1821	Amos C. Treadwell
1806	David Mintz	1822-23	Ethelbert Drake
1807	Richard Lottimer	1824	F. A. Ward
1808	Thomas Shonds	1825	Geo. A. Bain
1809	Erasmus Hill	1826	Daniel Hall
1810	Enoch Jones	1827-28	Thos. Crowder
1811	William Hill	1829	Christopher Thomas
1812	Leroy Merritt	1830	Leroy M. Lee
1813	Chas. Callaway	1831-32	C. Leach
1814	James Thomas	1833	I. Atkinson

1834	David Wood	1938-40	C. B. Culbreth
1835	G. W. Langhorne	1940-44	Leon Russell
1836	Jas. Jamieson	1944-45	W. A. Cade
1837-38	G. W. Langhorne	1945-50	R. L. Jerome
1839-40	J. H. Davis	1950-51	H. K. King
1841-42	J. E. Edwards	1951-57	J. A. Russell
1843-45	Wm. E. Pell	1957-62	J. W. Lineberger
1846	S. D. Bumpas	1962-64	W. R. Stevens
1847-48	S. S. Bryant	1964-69	A. F. Fisher
1849-50	Chas. F. Deems	1969-70	T. J. Barrett
1851	Ira T. Wyche	1970-	J. H. Miller, Jr.
1852-53	N. H. D. Wilson		
1854-55	Jos. H. Wheeler		
1856-57	Chas. P. Jones		
1858	Abram Weaver		
1859-60	Jas. H. Brent		
1860-61	John F. Long		
1862	L. S. Burkhead		
1863-64	Jas. Suydam		
1865-66	Joel W. Tucker		
1867-69	R. A. Willis		
1870-72	L. L. Hendren		
1873-76	W. C. Gannon		
1877-80	J. R. Brooks		
1881-82	F. H. Wood		
1883-85	L. S. Burkhead		
1886-89	L. W. Crawford		
1890	Jas. E. Mann		
1890-93	R. A. Willis		
1894	J. T. Lyon		
1895	L. L. Nash		
1896-97	F. A. Bishop		
1898-1900	R. B. John		
1900-03	R. F. Bumpas		
1904-06	G. T. Adams		
1907-09	R. C. Beaman		
1910-13	J. B. Hurley		
1914-17	E. H. McWhorter		
1918-21	H. A. Humble		
1921-23	W. V. McRae		
1923-25	J. W. Harrell		
1925-29	N. H. D. Wilson		
1929-34	A. J. Hobbs, Jr.		
1934-38	L. C. Larkin		

Associates

1965-67	J. A. Tingle
1967-69	J. J. Williams, Jr.
1969-70	D. C. Wise
1971-72	R. S. Pullman

THE BICENTENNIAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Chairman: Mrs. R. L. Pugh

Honorary Chairman: W. C. Chadwick

Vice-Chairman and Treasurer: Alfred Mayo

Secretary: Mrs. Graham Bizzell

Pastor: James H. Miller, Jr.

Mrs. W. L. Dowdy

Miss Sharon Grubb

Paul Cox