

Service Of Celebration

Of 100 Years Of Methodism In Western Columbus County

August 14, 1977

Cerro Gordo United Methodist Church

Cerro Gordo, North Carolina

L. Graham Royall, Minister

Robert M. Blackburn

RESIDENT BISHOP
RALEIGH AREA

James A. Auman

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
WILMINGTON DISTRICT

A PERSONAL

MESSAGE FROM

OUR BISHOP

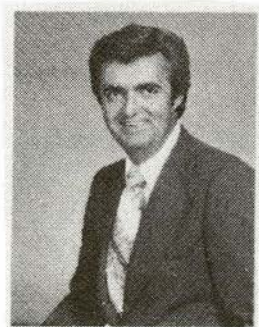


BISHOP ROBERT M. BLACKBURN

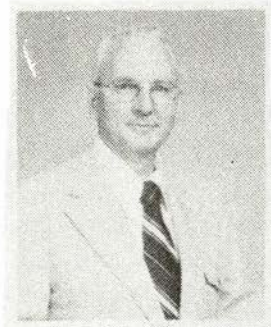
“My heartiest congratulations to the Cerro Gordo United Methodist Church on the occasion of its Centennial Observance. What a great history and heritage this church has established! We are grateful for your witness in the community across these many years. More than seventy - five percent of the United Methodist Churches have less than two hundred members. We are a denomination of small churches. We thank God for each one of them. May the next one hundred years be fruitful and joyous ones in the service of our Lord.”

Sincerely,

Robert M. Blackburn



LLOYD G. ROYALL



JAMES A. AUMAN



CERRO GORDO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Service Of Celebration

PRELUDE

"Agnes Dei"
Miss Mildred Griffin, Organist

Bizet

QUIET MEDITATION

Dearly beloved, the Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the conduct of worship and the due administration of his Word and Sacraments, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. All, of every age and station, stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies.

*CALL TO WORSHIP

MINISTER: O give thanks to the Lord, call on His Name, make known His deeds among the peoples!

PEOPLE: **Sing to Him, Sing praises to Him, Tell of all His wonderful works!**

MINISTER: Glory in His holy name:

PEOPLE: **Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!**
(Psalm 105:1-2,RSV)

*HYMN

"Rejoice, The Lord Is King"

Number 483
Charles Wesley

*LITANY FOR THE CHURCH

We celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the Cerro Gordo United Methodist Church to your glory, O God! Unto you we give thanks for your steadfast love; for creating us, sustaining us, and redeeming us; for the endless expressions of your love for us in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; for the promise of eternal life in Him.

We praise you, O God.

We honor the faithful pastors and people who brought your message to this place and established this church. Let us not forget them. By their energies this Church was gathered, given order, built up, and continued. We remember how they passed on the heritage of faith, celebrated your love in word and sacrament, invited many into the fellowship of Christ and called them to see and serve you in their neighbors.

We praise you, O God.

Almighty God: you built your church on the rock of human faith and trust; we praise you for Jesus Christ, the foundation and cornerstone of all we believe.

We praise you, O God.

For the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and for Moses, who led your people out of slavery, and established the Law in their hearts;

We praise you, O God.

For the prophets who listened for your Word and called your people back from disobedience and from the worship of man-made gods;

We praise you, O God.

For those who foretold the coming of your Son Jesus Christ, and prepared the way for His birth:

We praise you, O God.

For Mary and Joseph, who taught Him to love you and trained Him in Synagogues and Temples to serve you;

We praise you, O God.

For Christ, our Savior, who loved us and gave Himself for us on the cross;

We praise you, O God.

For the apostles and martyrs of the church, who gave their lives that we, in our day, might receive the good news of grace and forgiveness:

We praise you, O God.

For John and Charles Wesley, who proclaimed anew the gift of redemption and the life of holiness; for Francis Asbury, William Otterbein and Jacob Albright, who labored mightily to spread Scriptural holiness over this land.

We praise you, O God.

For Mr. W. J. Coleman, Baptist friend, who donated the land for the building of the first Methodist church in Cerro Gordo:

We praise you, O God.

For members of the congregation who donated logs that were ripped into rough boards for the building of our first church:

We praise you, O God.

For Stephen Nance, whose hands hewed the sills for the first church which support the floor of our church today:

We praise you, O God.

For all of those who gave of their labors, gifts and prayers for the building of our churches:

We praise you, O God.

For those whose names appear on the memorials of our church:

We praise you, O God.

Be with us, their children and revive their work among us, that, inspired by the same faith and upheld by the same grace in Word and Sacrament, we may share in the great mission which you have set before us.

O Lord, please hear us.

Save us, Father, from living in the past and from resting on the work of others. Let us find a new beginning and a new vision; that we may know our task in this place and this world today.

Amen.

THE WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

SOLO *"How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings"* Liddle
Joan Hammond

THE READING OF THE WORD Rev. Royall

THE PRAYER Rev. James A. Auman

OFFERTORY *"Lead Me Lord"* Wesley

*HYMN *"I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"* Number 294
Dwight

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER Rev. James A. Auman

SERMON Bishop Robert M. Blackburn

*HYMN *"O God, Our Help In Ages Past"* Number 28
Isaac Watts

SOLO *"Bless This House"*
Carolyn Andel

BENEDICTORAL LITANY FOR THE CHURCH

For the whole Church of God, that in peace and unity it may proclaim the good news of Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Methodist people throughout the world, and for the churches of this Conference and District, that rejoicing in their common heritage, they may help and strengthen each other in their worship and service, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For our Bishop, District Superintendent and the Pastor, that they may preach the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments, lead their people and in all things serve with Christian wisdom, truth and love, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the community in which we live and witness, and for every nation and community of mankind, that all men may come to know the truth as it is in Jesus and the world may be renewed by His power, let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, hear our prayer.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always.

Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.

POSTLUDE *"The Crusaders"* Stickles

The flowers on the altar are given for the glory of God and in memory of all deceased members of this church.

HISTORY OF CERRO GORDO

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In the early 1870's there moved into this community two devout and saintly souls, Mr. and Mrs. Belcher, staunch Methodists. Their nearest place of worship was Fair Bluff, where they attended when possible. Their pastor, The Rev. Mr. Curtain, was a Circuit Rider from Whiteville. He often stopped here in Cerro Gordo to visit with Mr. and Mrs. Belcher before continuing to Fair Bluff to fill his monthly appointment. Here, he knew was a field that needed opening, so he formed a habit of arriving here in time to preach in their home on Saturday afternoon, and still fill his appointment in Fair Bluff that evening. As was very characteristic of the beloved Circuit Rider, through love for Christ and humanity, his service was free gratis. His appointment in Fair Bluff was later changed to Sunday evening, and he would then preach here on Sunday afternoon.

As a direct result of these monthly meetings, the Cerro Gordo Methodist Church was born in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Belcher who lived on the present site of Mr. Jack Bryant's home on highway 76.

Later, from Robeson County came four Methodist preachers, The Rev. Mr. Lyon, The Rev. Mr. McLeod, The Rev. Mr. Guyton, and Rev. J. T. Kendal who held a revival here. Services were begun in a little one-room school house which was opposite the site of the old Baptist Church. The revival gathered momentum, and in a short time the school house could not contain the crowd; so, an improvised "bush shelter" was added. Such a revival has scarcely been seen. It lasted two weeks and people came from far and near. Six came into the Methodist Church on profession of faith, and many others by letter.

According to Historical Sketches of Churches in the Manuscript Room at the Perkins Library, Duke University, it states that the first Methodist sermon was preached at Cerro Gordo by the Rev. J. L. Bailey in 1874 and a revival which was held in 1877 resulted in the organization of a church. (This material was written about 1894.)

In an old church record book of Cerro Grodo M. E. Church South, Columbus Circuit, 1886, there is indication that some members affiliated themselves with the Methodist in July 1876, one year before the actual founding of the church. Conjecture is that this affiliation may have taken place in the Belcher home.

As a result of this revival, the Sunday School was born. The group began meeting in the school house each Sunday, and elected Mr. Aaron Martin as their first superintendent. They had no literature except the Bible and a few copies of catechisms that had been brought from other places. They were known as "The Methodist Society", and had a preacher only when one chanced to pass. They were weak in number but strong in faith. In spite of discouragements, they held on, and in a short time began a slow but gradual growth. Soon they outgrew the tiny school house and saw the urgent need of a house of worship of their own.

Mr. W. J. Coleman, a generous Baptist friend, offered to give a lot in the northeast corner of town down by a railroad, and it was accepted. The deed was executed October 6, 1883, to the church trustees, Adkison Nance, Kilby Benton, and J. W. Griffin. Materials were donated by members. Logs were cut, taken to the mill and ripped into rough boards. The sills were hand hewn by Stephen Nance. The men gave several days labor and the women served dinner when the "working" was held. In the spring of 1886, the building was ready for occupancy. Rough though it was, it represented service, sacrifice, and devotion. How proud they were of it!

The school house was abolished as a meeting place for the Sunday School, and they moved into their own place where they began the purchase of literature. They had reached the stage where they could call themselves a church, and the conference gave them a share in the Circuit Rider's time. Mr. Pruitt was the first preacher sent by the conference. He lived in Whiteville and preached here once each month. The Sunday School was progressing nicely. They had a superintendent, a secretary, a treasurer, and three teachers. They needed a musical instrument, so two young ladies, Miss Lucy Griffin and Miss Katie William (later Mrs. Kate Kellihan), raised by private subscription ninety-five dollars and an organ was placed in the church. This organ was used until 1920 when it was replaced by a piano.

In 1908 a lumber company began operations here and members of substantial means were added to the Sunday School and church. Again they were confronted with an inadequate building. It was decided to remodel the original building, the work begin done by Mr. Jim Thompson of Hallsboro. As they did not have access to the school house, they were forced to suspend all services until the repairs were completed.

In the fall of 1909, the Sunday School reassembled in the remodeled church with a new pulpit and table built and donated by H. H. Griffin, a large Bible donated by A. J. Barbour, and a preacher who gave four services a month.

This era of prosperity lasted for only a few years. The mill burned and there began a general exodus of members. It seemed that the Sunday School and Church would die, but there remained the faithful few, sometimes only twelve or fifteen in attendance, but still they held on, never relaxing.

In the years that followed, through the efforts of a faithful few, the membership was gradually rebuilt to approximately the present one. During this period, the church was affiliated with the Whiteville, Mt. Tabor, Chadbourn, and Fair Bluff Charges.

Again problems of inadequate facilities arose. After much discussion, it was decided to purchase a lot and move to a more desirable location. A lot was purchased from A. W. Williamson and the deed was executed April 25, 1950, to Ambrose Floyd, C. K. Dudley, and Z. V. Williamson, Sr., trustees.

On October 12, 1952, the Bible presented by Mrs. A. L. Griffin, the organ presented by Miss Mildred Griffin, and the memorial windows were dedicated. Bishop W. W. Peele preached the dedicatory sermon. In 1953 the church grounds were landscaped, and a major portion of the shrubbery was given by Mrs. Annie Mae Weaver of Darlington, S. C., a former member.

The Cerro Gordo Methodists are proud, not only of their physical accomplishments, but of their influence and service as well. In 1910 when the need of a Baptist Church arose, the Methodists gladly offered the use of their facilities while the Baptist built. They held Sunday School in the afternoon and preaching services the first and third Sundays. Many Methodist officers and teachers assisted in various capacities until they were fully organized.

Johnny Brooks, a missionary to Africa, though sent out by the Holiness Church, was trained in this Sunday School in his formative years.

On Sunday, April 8, 1956, Bishop W. W. Peele dedicated the church, assisted by Rev. V. E. Queen, Rev. E. G. Purcell, Jr., and Rev. W. C. Teachey.

Many memorials as well as other generous gifts have been presented to the church since 1959.

- 1960 – Steeple lights in memory of Miss Lucy Griffin
- 1960 – Bulletin Board in memory of Mr. O. Y. Williamson
- 1967 – Baptismal Font in memory of Dr. Floyd Johnson
- 1971 – Paraments in memory of Mrs. W. D. Meares - Mr. & Mrs. Wilson Kelliham
Mr. A. A. White
- 1975 – Hymnals in memory of Miss Jessie Griffin
- 1975 – Church Marker in memory of Mr. Frank Floyd, Mr. Ambrose Floyd
- 1976 – Altar Cross in memory of Mrs. O. Y. Williamson

Other gifts include –

- Church air conditioning a bequest of Mr. V. J. Benton, Sr.
- Shrubbery – Mrs. Ann W. Hutchins
- Water Heater and water cooler – Mr. Ben Williamson
- Christian and American Flags – Woodmen of the World
- Carpet for Primary Classroom – Mr. C. R. Griffin

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

In the early 1920's the Woman's Missionary Society was organized by a former member, Mrs. Floyd Johnson of Whiteville, who was then a district officer. Mrs. Ellen Turlington was the first president. Since then the woman's organization has born many names: Woman's Society of Christian Service, Women's Society of Christian Service, and at the present time bears the name, United Methodist Women. For fifty or more years the women of the church have played an important role in the affairs of the local church as well as the global mission of the church.

YOUTH GROUPS

The Epworth League was the first youth group known to exist in the Cerro Gordo Church. There were years when this was a vigorous organization and other years when, as the youth membership of the church declined, there was no youth organization at all.

In the late 50's, during the ministry of Rev. W. C. Teachey and under the leadership of Mrs. L. B. Nance, a Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized which continued through the ministry of Rev. Edward Coleman.

At present the youth of Fair Bluff - Cerro Gordo Charge meet jointly for Methodist Youth Fellowship. This organization began during the ministry of Rev. Bruce Taylor.

Vacation Bible School

The first Vacation Bible School was organized by the Rev. and Mrs. C. Freeman Heath in the late 1920's. Annual Bible School sessions continued up into the 50's when children of the church became few in number. After Fair Bluff - Cerro Gordo became a charge, a Day Camp type of Bible School was initiated through the efforts of Rev. Bruce Taylor. Children and leaders from both churches attended.

MINISTERS WHO HAVE SERVED

Rev. J. B. Bailey
Rev. Pruitt
Rev. T. J. Browning
Rev. E. W. Downum
Rev. R. F. Taylor
Rev. Jesse Porter
Rev. A. S. Barnes
Rev. A. R. Raven
Rev. C. W. Smith
Rev. J. T. Draper
Rev. T. H. Baines
Rev. F. F. Eure
Rev. W. C. Martin
Rev. D. L. Earnhardt
Rev. G. M. Daniel
Rev. G. Ray Jordan
Rev. B. E. Stanfield
Rev. R. G. L. Edwards
Rev. L. N. Chaffin

Rev. B. O. Merritt
Rev. T. E. Davis
Rev. C. F. Heath
Rev. M. W. Lawrence
Rev. F. B. Joyner
Rev. E. C. Maness
Rev. W. L. Loy
Rev. J. W. Lineberger
Rev. C. H. Andrews
Rev. E. G. Purcell, Jr.
Rev. C. W. Long
Rev. W. C. Teachey
Rev. Edward Coleman
Rev. C. O. Gardner
Rev. George Kelly
Rev. Bruce Davis Taylor
Rev. Wallace Green
Rev. L. G. Royall

One Hundred Years! Let it be just the beginning. Let our commitment to Christ and His purpose be as great as the commitment of friends and family in the past. Let us each one say, "The world is my Parish". Let each of us "Seek and save the lost", Let each of us expect a miracle and start by being a miracle.

Let each of us "love and serve Christ with our heart, mind, soul, and body; and let us love our neighbors as ourselves."

Let it be that in 2077 our descendants will be proud of the faith, love, and heritage that we of 1977 earnestly and faithfully lived to give to them.