

CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Christ Church began on October 25, 1953 as the Raeford Road Mission, an outpost Sunday School, sponsored by Hay Street Methodist Church. Some dozen or so leaders from Hay Street Church came out to a developing area on Raeford Road at various times to teach, organize classes and visit local individuals. Most of this initial effort was done under the direction of the Reverend Robert Regan, Hay Street associate pastor. The people met on Sunday in a house offered for Sunday school use by Mr. and Mrs. J.O. Tally, Sr. The small white frame building stood in front of where the present educational building now stands. Beginning in August of 1954, services also included preaching.

On October 31, 1954, the Reverend R.S. Barefield was appointed as the first pastor and Christ Methodist Church was chartered on February 13, 1955, with 45 members. Charter membership remained open for another year until the first building was officially opened for use. Land for the church building was given by the same Tally family and ground was broken on June 26, 1955 for what we now call the Education Building. Edmund F. Barbour was chairman of the building committee and the contractor was D.R. Allen & Son. Detailed plans were generally finalized on an almost daily basis. Structural designs were worked out in occasional board meetings. The Ten Dollar Club of the North Carolina Conference assisted financially by donating \$15,000 to help the church build its first unit which was opened for use on February 12, 1956. Carrier air conditioning was added the following year. The new organization also received sizable salary

allowances from the conference to help support its ministers until 1966 when the church underwrote the entire salary.

Soon after Bob Barefield arrived, it was apparent that a parsonage was needed. T.D. Taylor, chairman of the official board, found a house suited for that purpose at 481 McBain Drive and on August 23, 1956 the purchase was approved.

After two years Robert Barefield left Christ Church to become director of the Wesley Foundation at Appalachian State Teachers College in Boone. Ralph W. Fowlkes moved into the parsonage from Hope Mills to become the second pastor of the new church. The largest segment of the congregation was children and their Christian education was a major program. Sunday School continued to be an important part of this program and vacation church school offered an extended opportunity for education and socialization.

Like Mr. Barefield, Ralph Fowlkes remained pastor only two years and was followed by an older, more experienced minister in Jesse Lanning. Lanning continued to live in the parsonage until early in 1960 when the possibility of another residence was discussed. In May, 1960, the old J.O. Tally residence was purchased, which stood on the present site of the Home Federal Savings & Loan Association. A bank loan of \$10,000 was drawn to purchase the house and to remodel the brick dwelling. To make room for the new bank building, the house was moved to a recently acquired two-acre site joining the south end of the church property.

Mr. Lanning retired from the ministry at the 1960 session of the annual conference, right in the midst of the development of the Tally house as the new church parsonage. Gilbert Crutchfield, who

replaced Lanning as pastor in June of that year, moved into the house on McBain Drive, and on January 12, 1961 became the first pastor to live in the refurbished house near the church.

The Women's Society of Christian Service organized with Mrs. T.D. Taylor as its first president. On June 12, 1956, a Men's Fellowship was chartered with J.N. Fletcher as president. Barbara Candler (now Johnson) was president of the youth group. Scouting was an important part of the program from the very beginning. Three Cub Scout dens were formed as early as 1955 with Lacy Hester, Edmund Barbour and George W. Smith as leaders. The first Boy Scout troop was formed the following year.

It was not long before a volunteer choir was formed under the direction of Mrs. Sally Buckner. They took on a project which produced robes for the choir members. The first organist there is any record of was Mrs. Louise Barefoot.

Following the construction of the first unit, the growing congregation rapidly filled it up. By 1960, membership in the church had exceeded 300 and a more complete program was being offered in spite of persistent financial problems. Favorite fund raising projects were spaghetti suppers, bake sales and barbecues. In the summer, the church program was enhanced by softball, volleyball and other family sports activities which proved to be very popular.

The Sunday school under the direction of Stanley Brigman was ever increasing to the point that the number of classrooms was insufficient to meet the need. George Fincher proposed dividing the large upstairs classrooms by adding partitions. His plan was approved by the board and he and E.F. Dozier carried out the project.

A folding door was installed in June 1962 across the end of the sanctuary to provide an additional two classrooms.

At the last board meeting in 1962, with the encouragement of Mr. Crutchfield, a building committee was appointed to plan and raise money for the erection of a separate sanctuary building. Cletus Cronrath was placed in charge of this effort and was authorized to select others to assist him.

The year 1963 was important in the life of the church. Gilbert Crutchfield began his fourth year of service following three pastors each of which had remained only two years. Church membership exceeded 500 that year with nearly 200 enrolled in Sunday School. Dr. Millard Dunn, Fayetteville District superintendent who had encouraged and applauded the church growth, died on November 5, following a continuing illness. He was replaced in the district office by the Reverend Barney Davidson who had been at First Church, Morehead City.

When the 1964 session of the annual conference met, Davidson who had selected an energetic young pastor for the church, had him assigned to Christ Church. The Reverend Al Simonton had successfully organized Glendale Acres Church in Durham in 1959 and led the congregation there as pastor for five years. It was that kind of experience and leadership which Davidson calculated was necessary for Christ Church. Gilbert Crutchfield and his family moved to Rosemary Church, Roanoke Rapids. By this time four thousand dollars was on hand for building purposes.

Unknown at the time, Simonton's ministry would become the first

five year term and prove to be the most popular and productive in a thirty year history of the church.

It was pointed out at the December 1964 meeting of the board that 240 people had been in attendance at a recent worship service. It was also apparent that with the church membership approaching 500, the congregation in worship had outgrown what was designed to be the fellowship hall.

The people present at a church conference on March 27, 1966 voted unanimously to build a brick colonial-style sanctuary. A professional financial crusade provided the mandate to proceed, and all things were finally ready to build when suddenly a sensitive circumstance loomed up in the congregation.

At the next board meeting a simple resolution was read which requested permission to change the name of the church. Like a match to tinder, this set off a series of discussions that caused some of the early founding families and their faithful friends to align themselves on opposite sides of the breach. As a result, some withdrew their membership and others transferred to other churches. The original name prevailed, but the controversy disrupted what had been a steady inflow of new members at a time when continued growth would have been so beneficial.

It was a few months later before final building plans and a proposal for financing the sanctuary through the sale of bonds was presented to the congregation. On September 10, 1966, such approval was given through a majority vote and in January 1968 ground was finally broken for the long awaited place of worship. Bids for

the new project exceeded the committee's expectations so Player, Inc. negotiated with the committee a price of approximately \$120,000 which was a tribute to Cletus Cronrath and his faithful group for all their planning and decision making to fulfill this dream soon to become a reality.

The pastor, Alison Simonton, was in the fourth year of his popular pastorate and in spite of an offer to move, remained with the unfinished building program. Enthusiasm increased as the building rose from the ground until September 8, 1968 when the sanctuary was occupied for the first time and the first homecoming celebration was held. Two years later a Greenwood pipe organ was added.

For Paul Boone and Robert Moore, pastors who succeeded Simonton, the three main efforts were recruiting and training workers to become a viable church, increasing membership and keeping financially solvent. Membership-wise the church was successful but it was outgrowing its ability to function efficiently as the number exceeded 775. There appeared to be great promise for the future.

Paul Boone remained at Christ Church only one year and at the 1970 session of the annual conference was assigned to Troy. Robert F. Moore who had been at First Church, Garner only one year was assigned to Christ Church.

Moore's term as pastor was one of consolidating the gains as the membership continued to grow. It was a rather turbulent period. Many of the old thought patterns and conservative ideas of the early struggling church collided with a growing perception among another group that, with the expanding membership, the church could achieve

a more progressive and affluent posture. In view of these conflicting expectations, the pastor viewed his role as attempting to maintain the balance within the congregation.

During 1972 some special features were added as property items. George and Jane Fincher gave a carillon with the speaker installed in the steeple as a memorial to their parents. Members of the congregation donated music tapes for the sound system. The Finchers also added chimes to the Greenwood pipe organ in the sanctuary. Another fine addition, and one that serves the church well to the present day, is an outdoor electric sign on which letters may spell out slogans or announce church events. This sign was given on July 9, 1972 in memory of Harold F. McGinnis by his family. The outdoor chimes and the electric sign continue to receive favorable comment and are identified with the church throughout the neighborhood.

The Reverend Robert Moore became the second pastor to serve Christ Church for five years. During the last months of Moore's ministry some discussion began about the need for another parsonage. A local study committee and a district committee agreed the old Tally house still used as the parsonage was inadequate, but the church was not financially able due to the sanctuary indebtedness to contract more debt.

In June 1975, Moore was moved to Swansboro and the Reverend Joseph K. Bostick was appointed to Christ Church from Mt. Sylvan Church in Durham County. As a result of months of study regarding the facilities and financial needs of the church a \$95,000 loan was

sought from the United Methodist Development Fund in New York. Such action was taken on September 7, 1975 to consolidate all debt into one loan with a fifteen year repayment schedule. Now, supposing the debt was in control, a lot was purchased in 1976 on Clinchfield Drive in the Clairway subdivision off Village Drive and parsonage needs were given serious consideration. On July 11 at a church conference, the parsonage building committee and trustees were empowered to contract an eight room ranch style parsonage under the leadership of Paul Smith as chairman of the building committee. This move also contracted \$42,000 of additional debt scheduled over a twenty-five year repayment period.

The next step in property development took place on March 2, 1980. It appeared desirable to many people to acquire the seventy-two foot lot on Raeford Road joining the eastern property line of the church. An old house surrounded by overgrown shrubbery stood on the property. Everyone agreed the sight was a detriment to the appearance of the church property. To persuade the congregation to purchase the lot, an offer at the congregational meeting packaged selling the old Tally house which had been used as a parsonage with the promise that the additional debt would not be added to the church budget.

The vote favoring acceptance of the proposal to purchase the additional lot was barely a majority, due to the realization that it added another forty thousand dollars of debt to the church. This feeling was partially offset by a mortgage favoring the church for the old parsonage. Yet, all agreed that having the property enhanced the value of the church and might provide additional parking space.

Varieties of program and fund raising projects were introduced in the seventies. Softball became organized into church teams in 1974. Occasionally the youth group offered different forms as entertainment but fund raising was uppermost. On November 11, 1978 the first bazaar was held as an addition to the spaghetti supper, and this custom has continued to be an annual event ever since. In 1983, this project alone raised \$2,000.

Debt has been a persistent topic. In 1980, 262 inactive or unknown members were removed from the roll leaving 427 known members and \$145,643 debt. This translated to \$341.00 for every member of the church. This load, coupled with an annual budget of \$78,000 created a condition which promised to make finances a topic of concern for a long time.

June of 1981, produced another pastoral change. Charles Pollock, finishing his third year as pastor, was assigned to the church at Richlands and the Reverend C. Franklin Grill and his family moved from Southern Pines into the parsonage on Clinchfield Drive. It was a period of celebrating the positive aspects of the church, vollying the members together into a common purpose and building up the unity of the congregation.

The bicentennial year of the founding of the denomination came in 1984 as the congregation began its thirtieth year of existence as a church. The slogan, "Thirty Years of Service" was chosen to describe the image of the many faithful people who had been a part of the Raeford Road church.

Four members of Christ Church have been recommended for study for the Methodist ministry during those thirty years. Three of

these men are presently full-time clergy in the North Carolina Conference. They are Julian W. Scott (1961), Sam Dixon, Jr. (1971), Dennis Levin (1973), and Milton Little (1983) who preaches part-time.

In addition, scores of service connected military families have worshiped and served in the church on Raeford Road. Their children have been nurtured in those sub-divided classrooms, camped with the Scouts and played ball on the ball field. From there they have been moved by military orders across the land. Some have returned occasionally to retrace their early steps and long sentimentally for those happy times at Christ Church.

With high visibility, located on an important traffic artery in an ever growing city, Christ United Methodist Church continues to seek to serve those who come in. Almost miraculously, with its ever-present debt and transient membership characteristics, its electric sign as an ensign, its chimes to offer a marching cadence, Christ Church is kept alive by the spirit of God, the dedication of a core of faithful souls and the volunteer service of the majority of its officials.

	<u>Pastors</u>		<u>Sunday School Superintendents</u>
1954-1956	Robert A. Barefield	1955	Daniel A. Brown
1956-1958	Ralph E. Fowlkes	1959	E.F. Dozier
1958-1960	Jesse E. Lanning	1960	Stanley Brigman
1960-1964	G.W. Crutchfield	1972	Bill Nobles
1964-1969	Alison Simonton, Jr.	1973	Helen Lewis
1969-1970	Paul W. Boone	1974	George Fincher
1970-1975	Robert Moore	1975	Don Caldwell
1975-1978	Joseph K. Bostick	1984	Bobby Perkins
1978-1981	Charles L. Pollock	1985	Don Caldwell
1981-1985	C. Franklin Grill		

This history was prepared to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the chartering of Christ United Methodist Church, February 13, 1985.

C. Franklin Grill, Pastor
Mrs. Charlie DelGrande, Chairperson
Bicentennial Committee