

## **HISTORY OF COKESBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Cokesbury Church was named for the first two bishops in America. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury; who came from England about 1780 to aid in the spread of Methodism in the newly established nation, the United States. Francis Asbury was the first circuit rider to go from settlement to settlement to preach.**

**In 1784, the first Cokesbury Church was built of logs on the site where the present cemetery is. The lot for the church was sold for \$1.00 by John D. Cawthorne. The deed for Cokesbury Church was drawn on May 25, 1840 and recorded in Warrenton, North Carolina. Later on the log church was torn down and a new frame building was erected in its stead, sometime later.**

**In the early autumn of 1884, a centennial was held to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the Cokesbury Church. This celebration was held in a bush arbor on the south side of the church. Rev. J. B. Griffith preached on this occasion.**

**In 1888, a third Cokesbury Church was erected and finished the same year. The first service to be held in the new church was in early autumn. This church was burned completely on December 25, 1925 when a fire ball being played with by some boys in the community during their holiday celebration lodged on the roof and ignited the church. For about 10 months there was no church in which to worship. Services were held in the Cokesbury School building.**

**The present church is the fourth church to be erected on this spot. The new church was completed and dedicated on the third Sunday of October, 1926. Rev. J. T. Gibbs, a retired Methodist minister of Warrenton preached the dedication sermon. A basket dinner was served on the grounds. Cokesbury was also the home church of Rev. Gibbs. This church was paid for by the congregation, which numbered around 200 members with a donation of \$1,000 from the Duke fund.**

**Cokesbury was also the home church of the Rev. J. J. Renn, who was district superintendent of the Raleigh district in the early 1900's. The memorial window in this church was given in his memory by his children.**

**The east wing was added in 1954, consisting of two large classrooms and a basement. Much of the timber and labor was given and work was done by the men of the church.**



**In 1964, the educational wing was added on the west side of the church, which consisted of a kitchen, bathrooms, classrooms and the Robert Wortham room. This was completed and ready for use in 1965. A dedication service was held on November 24, 1968. The note was burned showing that the wing had been paid for. Rev. Elton Hendricks, a former pastor delivered the sermon.**

**In June of 1971 a renovation of the present sanctuary was begun. The pulpit was renovated and a new choir loft was added. A new narthex was also added at this time. All new furnishings were given by members of the church and new carpet was installed. This renovation was completed and a dedication service was held on July 9, 1972. Rev. Dr. John J. Rudin II, a professor of Christian Communications at Duke University Divinity School, was guest speaker for the occasion. On May 21, 1974 this new addition was paid for in full.**

**New memorial windows were installed in 1975 by members of the church.**

**New colonial lights in the sanctuary were given and installed in memory of Rosa Spain Stainback by the Turner G. Stainback, Sr. family in 1976.**

**On Sunday, September 9, 1984 at the morning worship service, we at Cokesbury Church celebrated our bicentennial of two hundred years and also two hundred years of Methodism. Our pastor, Rev. Leon J. Pernell was in charge of the service. He read the history of Cokesbury United Methodist Church written by church historian, Dorothy S. Jones. Dr. Frank Baker, a retired Methodist minister and professor at Duke University Divinity School was guest speaker for this occasion. Immediately after the service, everyone gathered outside for the dedication of the Memorial Steeple by Rev. Pernell. After the benediction, dinner was served on the grounds under the traditional "Bush Arbor" as was the case when the church celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1884. Many of the church members were dressed in clothes of the Colonial Days. The church was filled and there were people from as far away as Florida, Colorado and North Dakota, who came to celebrate with us. The day was enjoyed by all. The Bicentennial Banner was placed in the Narthex.**

**In 1990, a stone memorial wing was added covering the basement steps in front of the east wing.**

**Our goal for the near future is "to go-station," which is to have a full time pastor and parsonage in the Cokesbury community.**

**Since July, 2001, we have been a station church, with a full time pastor and a new parsonage, with all new furnishings, which are all paid for. Rev. Michael E. Rocheleau, wife Mary, and daughter, Makenna, were the first residents of the new parsonage. Celebration services of the Station Church were held July 1, 2001. Our District Superintendent, Glenda Johnson introduced the speaker for the occasion, Bishop Marion Edwards, who brought the morning message. After the service, everyone went outside and across the road to the new parsonage where the dedication was held on the front porch. Rev. Rocheleau, Superintendent Johnson, and Bishop Edwards, each had a part in the dedication. After the dedication, everyone went back to the church and a covered dish luncheon was served in the Fellowship Hall and enjoyed by all.**

**Over a span of 217 years, 69 pastors have served Cokesbury United Methodist Church.**

**Our mission, is to provide Christian education and worship for its members and visitors, and to fulfill the great commandment of Jesus Christ by making disciples through local and world wide ministries.**

**Dorothy S. Jones  
Church Historian**