

HISTORY  
OF  
EPWORTH METHODIST  
CHURCH  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA



HISTORY OF EPWORTH METHODIST CHURCH  
Durham, North Carolina

This is your copy of the History of Epworth Methodist Church. It is the result of some 18 months of collecting and piecing together information from various sources.

Early records of the Church are few. Memory is short. Admittedly, there are many errors in this first writing of the History. Already, the members of the Official Board have made many corrections, additions and suggestions for improving the History.

But before the final writing is attempted, the Official Board wants each member of the congregation to have the same opportunity.

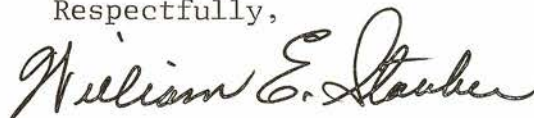
During the next few weeks, we ask that you and your family read over the History. In doing so, make notes of any omissions or incorrect facts which might appear. When you have finished, make a list of your suggested changes and corrections and pass them on to your Historian. (Do not concern yourself with grammatical errors. These will be corrected in the final writing.)

You may keep this first copy of the History. Note your changes or corrections on a separate piece of paper. Then contact your Historian by mail, by telephone, or in person. DEADLINE WILL BE MARCH 1, 1965.

It is the desire of the Official Board to make the final history of the first 13 years of our Church, as well as all succeeding years, something that will be appreciated and enjoyed by everyone in the congregation.

We need and welcome all the help you can offer.

Respectfully,



William E. Stauber  
Historian

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HISTORY OF EPWORTH METHODIST CHURCH  
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"The First Thirteen Years"

THE SEED

The fact that some day there would be a Methodist Church located in the southern part of Durham was never questioned. But that it should have been started when it was, or that it would have grown to its present size in thirteen conference years left plenty of room for discussion back in 1951.

There was no doubt that the biggest suburban movement following World War II was in the Hope Valley-Chapel Hill Road areas, but the population "explosion" created by the war years had yet to have its full effect.

During this time local Methodists, anxious to see the Church expand in the Durham area, had formed a local group called the Methodist Society. There were some Methodists, however, opposed to Church extension. It was their feeling that any new neighborhood congregations at this time would only draw from and weaken the present groups.

Nevertheless, the Society turned to the Board of Missions and Church Extension for a survey of the southern areas of Durham. This was approved. Results of the survey revealed not only a number of inactive Methodist families but a good number of non-church families as well.

Thus, the Methodist Society, on May 18, 1951, voted to proceed with plans to organize a Church somewhere in the Hope Valley-Chapel Hill Road areas. The name would be Epworth.

### THE FIRST PASTOR - CARL B. NEWTON

At the Annual Conference on November 4, 1951, Epworth Methodist was recognized and assigned its first pastor, Rev. Carl B. Newton. The young minister was received into the congregation without a complaint. There were no members.

### THE FIRST SERVICE

Young Newton worked dilligently to establish a congregation. The first service of "The New Methodist Church In Durham", as listed on the Church bulletin, was held on a cold, rainy Sunday, February 3, 1952. Those participating in this first service included Dr. E. L. Hillman, District Superintendent, and Dr. B. G. Childs. Special music was furnished by a quartet from Trinity Methodist. Attendance was 46, mostly Methodist friends from other local churches. Offering was \$48.03.

Rev. Newton was most encouraged, but the following Sunday he came face to face with a more realistic picture. Attendance 26, Offering \$21.75. And a good number of these were still friends from other churches. At the third service on February 17, attendance was 14, offering \$11.25.

### THE FIRST MEMBER

It wasn't until March 9, 1952, that Newton received his first member, Mrs. Lucille Greene Murray. Having known Newton in years previous, she had agreed to join "just to encourage him".

One week later, Newton found the boost he had been needing. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson W. Hopkins joined his "congregation". Mr. Hopkins played a major role in the Church as long as he lived. He

served as Chairman of the Official Board from 1952 until June of 1955. He also headed up the Building Committee for the first sanctuary, and served as a member of the Board of Trustees until his death.

On March 23, 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Claiborn S. Woods were added to the roll of the Church. Both Mr. and Mrs. Woods proved to be tireless workers. Both served on the Official Board during the early stages. Mrs. Woods also served as secretary of the Church, and Superintendent of the Sunday School. Mr. Woods was also active as a Trustee and a member of the sanctuary building committee. He became chairman of the Official Board succeeding Mr. Hopkins in July of 1955 but failed to complete his term. Both Mr. and Mrs. Woods filled in as teachers when the need arose.

On March 30, 1952, Rev. Newton brought in two more new members, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Whaley. The Whaleys also proved to be most loyal members with Mr. Whaley serving on the Official Board and other capacities until his passing on July 5, 1955, the first death of a member.

Four more new members were added during the first year of the Church. On April 4, 1952, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond B. Moore, and Patricia Moore became members. The following Easter Sunday, Mrs. Alma Beavers Reece, the oldest member of the Church and 91 years old at this writing, joined the congregation to give the Church a total membership of 11.

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL STARTED

Easter Sunday, April 13, 1952 was a big occasion for the new

EPWORTH BECOMES EPWORTH - POLLOCK BECOMES PASTOR

At the Conference, Bishop Garber named Rev. Henry Pollock as pastor. With Pollock's appointment, the name Epworth was restored without fanfare or comment.

Growth of the Church during the second year was disappointing. Many people expressed a keen interest in the Church. Some would attend on occasions, but new members were hard to come by. Many Sundays found only a handful of people attending Church Service. Sunday School often consisted of no more than an adult class taught by a visiting teacher with someone volunteering to take care of any children that might be present. Wednesday night Cottage services, which had been started the previous April, were all but discontinued.

BUILDING LOTS PURCHASED

During the year, however, there was one sign of progress. Two lots where the present Church structures now stand were acquired for \$10,500. Full credit must be given Rev. Pollock for his efforts in obtaining these lots.

SCOUT TROOPS FORMED FOR BOYS

Also, through the efforts of Rev. Pollock, Cub Scout Pack 461 was formed on March 1, 1953. Two new members, Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Campbell, were a great help in starting this Pack. Mr. Campbell served as Cubmaster with Mrs. Campbell as Den Mother.

A month later, Rev. Pollock organized the First Scout Troop in the Church. But both the Scout Troop and Cub Pack were short lived, due to the unexpected departure of the minister.

POLLOCK SUCCEEDED BY GRILL

Rev. Pollock's year with the Church was cut short when he was transferred in September to the Western Conference. Rev. Frank Grill, succeeding Pollock, could report little progress at the annual Conference in 1953. Only eight new members had been added. These included Mr. and Mrs. B. J. Campbell, Elizabeth Jean Pollock, Mr. & Mrs. Mrs. Kate Gordon Felton, George H. Ferguson, Jerry Wayne McCarver, and Elizabeth Ann McCarver.

BISHOP GARBER'S MASTER STROKE

Two years, 18 members and a Church site. It was at this low ebb in the history of the Church that Bishop Paul N. Garber, doing the unexpected, may well have performed a "modern miracle". At the Annual Conference on November 1, 1953, Rev. Dan M. Sharpe was assigned to Epworth Methodist Church.

REV. SHARPE COMES TO EPWORTH

"Brother Dan", as he had been known affectionately throughout the Conference as well as in his many pastorates, had just completed 37 years of devoted service. He and Mrs. Sharpe were looking forward this year to a well earned retirement at his home in Durham. But "Brother Dan" took one look at the struggling Church, and couldn't refuse the call.

With the energy of a young man and the recruiting tactics of a veteran marine sergeant, "Brother Dan" went to work. By the end of the Conference year, Rev. Sharpe had gained 42 new members. Interest was at a new high. Wednesday night Cottage services had been restored. Fellowship suppers were frequent. Official Board



and Commission meetings were being held regularly.

#### BUILDING PROGRAM LAUNCHED

With the help of the Methodist Conference Committee of 100, the support of the Board of Missions, the \$10 Club, and Bishop Garber's \$100 Club, the Church was able in 1954 to launch its building program. The building committee consisted of W. W. Hopkins, chairman, L. R. Maness, Raymond B. Moore, G. H. Ferguson, Mrs. Alma Reece, Sterling Nicholson, Jr., C. S. Woods and E. S. Yarbrough, Jr.

#### GROUND BREAKING

Ground breaking ceremonies were held on Sunday afternoon, October 17 at 2 o'clock. Participating in the program were Ed S. Swindell, Jr., who led the singing; Dr. C. D. Barclift, then pastor of Trinity Methodist; Rev. T. A. Collins, Church Extension; Dr. A. J. Walton, Board of Missions; Dr. W. L. Clegg, District Superintendent; and Rev. Sharpe, pastor.

The report to the Annual Conference in November was joyfully received. Epworth Methodist at the end of its third year boasted a net membership of 58 and a building program which was just before starting.

#### MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

Members added to the congregation during the year included William Joseph McCarver, Sr., Mrs. Dan M. Sharpe, Miss Ellen Kelley, Miss Marjorie Nellis, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde W. Robinson, Mrs. Lucy Womble, W. E. Arnold, Mrs. J. E. McCarver, Johnny Campbell, Miss Rebecca Moore, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. Sterling

first president, they played an important role in this phase of the Church's growth.

CHURCH DEDICATION - COST: APPROXIMATELY \$47,000

Then the glorious day arrived - the dedication of the new Church building on May 22, 1955. The Church was filled to capacity by members and friends. The entire congregation of St. John's Methodist Church joined Epworth in the glad occasion. Rev. Sharpe dedicated the Church "to be open for worship of God and service of men". A fellowship picnic followed the 11 o'clock dedication.

Cost of the new building was approximately \$47,000. Architect for the building was Kenneth Jennings.

From November 1954 until the dedication of the Church on May 22, 1955, 19 more new members were added. They were: Mr. and Mrs. Alex Atkins, James Edward Aldridge, Willis H. Aldridge, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. I. D. Darnell, Dr. and Mrs. Robert John, Mrs. J. L. (Alma) Mann, Joseph H. Mann, Lesley Edward Owen, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Stauber, Frank Bert Woolbright, Mr. and Mrs. W. Clifton Moone, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Ray Kirby, and Laura Marion Nicholson.

CHARTER DATE - 77 MEMBERS

The charter date, having been tentatively established for many occasions, was ultimately set to coincide with the date of the dedication. With the Church taking in 19 members up to and on the day of the dedication, the charter membership totalled 77. Only two of the original members had been lost by transfer during this time.

From then until the completion of the new Conference year, on June 30, eight additional members were added. These were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Graef, Mr. and Mrs. Littleton Joseph Glass, Mr. and Mrs. Everette C. Smith, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. Orie D. King.

Thus, the Church ended its first new Conference year with a new sanctuary, and a total net membership of 85.

(NOTE: Due to the phenomenal growth of the Church through the years, names of new members after June 1955 will not be incorporated in the running account of the Church history. These names are a part of the Official Record of the Church. Neither will any effort be made to recognize members who have had outstanding roles in the growth of the Church. To do so would result in an endless and cumbersome account of the activities of the congregation. Names appearing henceforth are merely used because of connection with the particular event. If some event fails to include such names, it is because they were unobtainable. If any member can supply this information, it will be incorporated in the final draft of the Church History.)

#### FROM DOUBT TO DEBT

If the first four years of Epworth Methodist Church represented an era of doubt, the years to follow were certain to represent an era of debt. For the first time in its history, the Church owed money. -- some \$25,000 to \$30,000 on the building alone. Badly needed was equipment for the sanctuary and classrooms.

#### THE YEARS 1955-1957

The general policy of the Official Board during the next two years was that if the Church had the money, the bills would be paid. If the Church didn't have the money, a member or members would put it up. On more than one occasion, a deficit budget was met in just this fashion.

Though the Church continued to grow, it was still more like

a large family. Everyone knew everyone else. Sunday School attendance averaged in the fifties. John Reynolds, the Sunday School Superintendent, conducted opening devotionals for the entire Sunday School attendance. Then the children adjourned to their classes leaving the adults in the sanctuary where they enjoyed the teaching of Dr. R. H. Sales, professor of religion at Duke.

Oddly enough, there were no teen-agers or young people. Members of the Church were either older people whose children had grown up and moved away, or younger people who had moved to Durham with smaller children. Through the years, Epworth literally grew their own junior, intermediate and senior departments. Actually, this proved a blessing in disguise. It gave the membership a chance to catch its breath, look to the future and plan accordingly.

#### FIRST PARSONAGE

But the breath was a short one. The future suddenly became the present, and the plans were many and varied and always heartily discussed. For example, as early as April, 1956, the Official Board recognized the need for a parsonage. "Brother Dan", who owned and lived in his own home in Durham, would not be the pastor forever. In February, 1957, Louis Jones was named to head a building committee to build or buy a parsonage. The tentative plan was to build on the lot behind the church which had been obtained in October, 1956, at a cost of \$1800. A month later, Jones and his committee presented plans. But all the looking and planning came to an abrupt end when the house at 2812 University Drive was purchased in May, 1957 at a price of \$17,000. The Church had a parsonage, and some more debt.

Smaller problems were more or less the order of the day. But the Official Board and the members as a whole seemed to thrive on solving them. All in all, 1955 to 1957 were two great years for the Church, "the two best", some of the older members are quick to tell you. The Church had added 52 more members and lost six by the end of the fiscal year in 1956. A net membership of 129. At the Annual Conference a year later (1957), Rev. Sharpe reported an additional 60 new members against a loss of eight. Net membership 181. "Brother Dan", and he is free to admit he had recruited some good help in his members, had truly placed the Church on a firm foundation, both religiously and economically. Throughout a good part of Rev. Sharpe's four years at Epworth, he was ably assisted by Rev. Robert Regan. Mr. Regan, although now serving the Methodist Church in Washington, still remains a member of our Quarterly Conference.

#### REV. SHARPE LEAVES EPWORTH

It was with more than a bit of remorse that the members said "goodbye" to Rev. Sharpe at a fellowship supper held in his honor. His return visits from time to time always recall a most cherished period in the history of the Church.

#### THE FIRST CHRISTENINGS

The first recorded christening in Epworth Church was on August 14, 1955. Two infant girls were christened by Rev. Sharpe, at the regular 11 o'clock service. They were Claudia Ann John, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. R. W. John, and Emily Yarbrough, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed S. Yarbrough, Jr. Neither of these infants are

now affiliated with the Church.

Not until September 16, 1956 did the Church witness the christening of its first infant boy. He was William Phillips Stauber, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Stauber, and still affiliated with the Church at this writing.

#### SCOUTS REACTIVATED FOR BOYS

In February of 1956, a Scout Committee with Sterling Nicholson, Jr., chairman, looked into the possibilities of reactivating the Scout Troop originally started back in 1953. After two meetings with prospective Scouts and their parents, Troop 461 again became active and has continued to be an important element in the overall church program.

In April of 1956 Cub Scout Pack 461 was likewise reactivated.

#### REV. WILSON TAKES OVER

Rev. Sharpe was succeeded by Rev. Kelly Wilson, Jr., July 1957. The flame that was lighted when "Brother Dan" came to Epworth back in 1953 never missed a flicker when Rev. Wilson took over. Wilson had all the energy of his predecessor, and a dutiful wife to back him up. What's more, he had the makings of a small congregation within his own family - four children, Kelly III, Jimmy, Johnny and Rebecca.

#### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

For several months back in 1957, Alcoholics Anonymous had been looking for a meeting place in the southwestern part of Durham. Epworth had been approached, but some Board members were reluctant

to the idea. One of Wilson's first actions was to grant them permission to use the Church basement for meetings. Meetings twice-a-week have continued here since July, 1957.

Wilson was strong on organization. He followed the Discipline to the letter. Back in the earlier years of the Church, there were scarcely enough members to fill the chairmanships of all the Commissions and various committees of the Church. Now there were, and Kelly Wilson made a point of seeing that all of them were formed and active. The Official Board members were, for the first time, placed on a three-year elected rotating basis.

Within the first three months, Wilson had reorganized the adult choir and started a junior choir. Mrs. Ronald Sondee became the first choir director.

Wilson also brought in Rev. Merle K. Frank, a Duke Divinity student, to serve as his assistant.

#### GROWTH OF MYF

Recognizing the fact that the youth of the Church were growing up, the new minister split the Methodist Youth Fellowship into two groups. Mrs. George F. Leist was in charge of the nine to twelve year olds. Wilson himself took over the teen-agers. He was later assisted by Frank.

The MYF had originally been formed several years earlier. The first record of the group shows up in 1954 with Patricia Moore as president, and Miss Marjorie Nellis as leader. Mrs. John Lane, taking over as leader in 1955, assured the continuing success of the MYF at Epworth.

On December 31, 1957, the Church held its first Night Watch service, sponsored by the MYF. For a number of years, these services proved most popular. They have since been discontinued.

Shortly after the New Year, 1958, the Official Board took a long look at the Church's growth and financial conditions. Already, there had been some talk of adding a new Church School building, but the Church still owed \$28,000 on the present building as well as \$12,000 on the parsonage. It was the general feeling that the present debt would have to be reduced before any future building progress could be considered. Thus, a Capital Fund Drive was held in February of 1958. No exact figures on the results of the drive were recorded. But the program was termed a success, so much so that talk of a new addition to the Church was heard with more and more frequency.

#### KINDERGARTEN AND NURSERY

In the meantime, the minister had been busy looking into the possibility of starting a kindergarten at Epworth. Although there was some mild opposition to the idea, this was overcome when the congregation was assured that the kindergarten would pay its own way.

At a meeting of the Church membership on March 30, 1958, the kindergarten was approved. Mrs. Ed S. Yarbrough, Jr., a strong advocate of the school, was named enrollment chairman, Mrs. W. E. Stauber, treasurer, and Mrs. Sherwood Githens, Jr., equipment chairman.

The kindergarten proved to be as good as the proponents promised. It has operated within its budget throughout its existence. Mrs.



J. A. Hastings has been kindergarten teacher since it was started except for the year 1961-62 when, due to sickness, Mrs. J. N. Gary served as her replacement. The following year, Mrs. Gary returned to take over the newly-formed nursery for three and four year olds.

#### THE FIRST DEATHS

The Church suffered the first death of a member when John T. Whaley passed away on July 5, 1955, shortly after the dedication of the new Church building. The first funeral conducted in the new Church, however, was that of W. W. Hopkins, the Church's second member and first Official Board Chairman. Mr. Hopkins died on May 31, 1958.

#### DR. C. D. BARCLIFT NEW DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

The end of the Conference year, 1958, showed an increase of 33 new members while losing eight. Net membership was 206. The Church did get a new District Superintendent, however. Dr. C. D. Barclift, former pastor of Trinity Methodist, was named to succeed Dr. W. L. Clegg.

#### FIRST COLLEGE FUND PROGRAM

In August of 1958, the Conference, recognizing the present as well as future needs of higher education, adopted a College Fund Program. Epworth's fair share was set at \$5,000. The Church over pledged their share. But at the end of the three-year campaign, the program had fallen far short of its goal. If Epworth had anything to brag about, it was only that they had done better than most.

### SCOUT TROOPS FOR GIRLS

Although Girl Scout Troops have never been a Church-sponsored function, Brownie and Girl Scout troops have used the Church building for meetings since September, 1958. The first troop to use the Church was Brownie Scout Troop No. 141 organized by Mrs. George McKee and Mrs. Robert L. Lyon.

### PRAYER SERVICES

In September, 1958, mid-week prayer services at Epworth were temporarily discontinued. This came as a shock to some few of the members who had attended regularly through the years. As far back as the first year of the Church, prayer service had been a part of the Church program. Discontinued the second year, they were revived when Rev. Sharpe was named pastor, and had been held with regularity through the years. But attendance grew smaller and smaller, until the Official Board voted to discontinue the services.

Actually, the discontinuance of the services represented more of a change in the make-up of the congregation rather than any apathy on the part of the members. The small group of members in the early years consisted of older people who were very close to each other. Getting together for prayer services, fellowship suppers, and other activities was an easy and natural thing to do.

Now, five years later, the majority of the members of the growing congregation were younger in age. Families represented a cross section of the business, industrial, professional and civic life of Durham.

Many fathers were gone during the week, or bound by other meetings. Mothers had school children with homework, and babies with

wet diapers. Many members gave much time to Board and Commission meetings, Women's Society, Boy Scouts, and so on. The choir, with its new director, Ed Hardin, were working more diligently than ever. No one night in the week found the congregation without a multitude of conflicts. So the prayer services, temporarily discontinued, were never revived.

#### MRS. N. P. ALEXANDER PASSES

The congregation was saddened on Sunday morning, October 18, 1958 when the bulletin carried the notice of the sudden death the day before of Mrs. N. P. Alexander. Lelia, as she was known to so many of her friends, had come to Epworth at the persuasion of Rev. Sharpe back in 1953.

Although not a member - her membership was at Main Street Congregational Christian Church - she was a happy addition to the music program. Always a smile, a pleasant word, a wonderful lady and an excellent organist - that was Mrs. Alexander.

With the loss of Mrs. Alexander, Mrs. Charles E. Llewellyn, Jr. became Church organist.

#### GROWING PAINS

In February, 1959, one year after the Capital Fund Drive had been held, the Official Board again met to consider an addition to the present building. There was no doubt about the need. The Sunday School attendance was averaging close to 150 each Sunday. Every available space was in use including the kitchen and basement, and many members recall the weekly trek of Mr. Herndon's young people's class to the basement of the parsonage. It is fair to say that Epworth was "bustin' out" all over.

On April 1, a Building Committee was named, consisting of Elisha M. Herndon, co-chairman in charge of fund raising; Sterling Nicholson, Sr., co-chairman in charge of construction. On the fund raising committee were Mrs. W. J. Harris, Mrs. E. M. Cameron, S. E. Randall, G. A. Klein, O. D. King, and Sterling Nicholson, Jr. The construction committee consisted of Mrs. Sherwood Githins, Jr., Dr. H. N. Haines, Henry Nicholson, M. S. McKibben, John Reynolds and L. A. Jones. On May 4, 1959, the Last Quarterly Conference of the Church voted unanimous approval for an addition to the present Church facilities.

End of Conference year 1959, Kelly Wilson reported 20 new members to the congregation, as against a loss of 15, for a net membership total of 221. The bright spot in his report was a Children's Building Program that was only being held up for final building plans.

But little things often take precedence over bigger things. Epworth was still struggling with its operating budget. Now, a self-sustaining Church with no help from the Conference, week to week expenses momentarily dimmed the dream of a new addition.

The parsonage, which had been purchased at a "bargain" price, was proving not to be such a bargain after all. Almost every Official Board meeting concerned itself with repairs for the parsonage. The parsonage well afforded an insufficient amount of the hardest kind of water, while the basement, in rainy seasons, had more than an abundance. Louis Jones fought this and other losing battles with the parsonage almost singlehandedly during the years to follow.

(In September, 1959, William Erbach, of the Duke Divinity School was assigned to Epworth. Erbach came as a replacement for Rev. Frank who had left Durham at the end of the spring school term. Rev. Erbach, a converted Jewish boy, proved to be a big help to the minister and the Church. He was extremely well liked by the young people and devoted much of his time to the Methodist Youth Fellowship.)

Having met the budget and other crises, and spurred on by a successful every-member canvas for the year to come, thoughts were again turned to the Building Program. Plans by William Van E. Sprinkle were submitted and approved. On Sunday, June 19, 1960, the congregation unanimously approved the building project. It was subsequently approved by the Durham District Board of Buildings and Locations. Everything was in hand except the money.

The year ended on a good note. Special emphasis which had been placed on membership during the year had proved fruitful. At the Annual Conference in 1960, the minister reported the addition of 46 new members, as against a loss of 18. The total net membership now stood at 249.

#### THE LOSS OF DR. AND MRS. R. H. SALES

During the summer of 1960, the Church suffered the loss of one of its most active families, Dr. and Mrs. R. H. Sales, and their two children, when Dr. Sales was named Dean of Religion at Mt. Union College, Alliance, Ohio. A professor of religion at Duke, Sales had been affiliated with Epworth since 1953. He had filled the pulpit on numerous occasions, and had served as teacher of the

Adult Class through a good part of this time. Mrs. Sales had served as organist for both Sunday School and Church, and had taught several of the children's classes. She had also been a mainstay in the early days of the Women's Society. It left a big void in the class, and for two years, until Mrs. E. M. Herndon became the regular teacher, the class existed from one Sunday to the next - some good teachers, some bad - but with little continuity.

CRUSADE COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S BUILDING NAMED

As the new fiscal year started, efforts were turned to the fund-raising campaign for the Children's Building. A special Crusade Committee was named to push the drive. Members of this Committee were Elisha M. Herndon, Chairman, Sterling Nicholson, Sr., Advance Gifts Chairman, and William E. Stauber, Publicity Chairman. Crusade Team Captains were Dr. Sherwood Githins, Jr., M. S. McKibben, John E. Reynolds, Gordon L. Carpenter, Dr. H. N. Haines, S. E. Randall, S. J. Nicholson, Jr., L. R. Maness, John W. Franklin, and Gilbert A. Klein.

The drive proved a success. Although the Crusade Committee had set its sights on \$65,000, the drive actually produced pledges and gifts of about \$46,000. But the low bid for construction was less than expected. Therefore, building could commence as soon as financing could be arranged.

Although scheduled to get underway shortly after the New Year, bad weather hindered construction. It wasn't until the following spring that actual building really started.

### JIM FOWLER

Good choir directors are hard to come by. Ed Hardin, son of a Methodist Bishop and a student at Duke, had done wonders for the choir during the past two school years. But the Church lost him to graduation in the spring. To fill these gaps, the Church always turned to Dr. Githens. Busy as he was, he managed to keep the choir together. Then on September 11, 1960, the Church was fortunate in obtaining Jim Fowler, son of a Methodist minister and an outstanding student at Duke. Though president of the Men's Student Government Association during his senior year, he remained on with the Church through the spring of 1962, working with both the adult and junior choirs. Upon his leaving, Dr. Githens again carried on.

### FIRST CHURCH WEDDING

There are no records to show it, but it is known that the ministers of the Church officiated at numerous weddings through the years. One or more of these weddings were conducted in the Church. But the first real Church wedding was not held until June 24, 1961, when Nora Browning Ragland, daughter of Mrs. Sterling Nicholson, Sr., was married to Wallace Van Witmer. Rev. Wilson officiated at the ceremony. According to the ladies in attendance, "there was never a more beautiful bride", and "the Church never looked better".

In the meantime, another record year of growth had been experienced. And with growth comes differing opinions. Rev. Wilson was completing his fourth year with Epworth. The question arose concerning whether Wilson would be moved in the midst of the building program. Wilson was closely connected with the building, had personally supervised much of the planning and the actual building.

Feelings were divided. Some thought the pastor should be transferred. Others wanted him to stay on through completion. Wilson himself expressed a keen desire to stay on for a fifth year. In the Pastoral Relations Committee, the decision was a stand-off, leaving the decision entirely to the Bishop without recommendation.

#### REV. WILSON GOES TO LOUISBURG

At the Annual Conference in 1961, Rev. Wilson was sent to Louisburg College to serve as minister of the First Methodist Church and Chaplain for Louisburg College.

Wilson's departure brought to an end another era in the history of Epworth. True, there may have been some members who could not always agree with Wilson. But there were few, if any, who wouldn't admit that he had contributed much to the growth of the Church. One thing you could say for him -- he got things done. The Church could boast of a full and well-rounded program of activities. As of June, 1961, the Church could show a total of 57 new members against a loss of 15, for a net membership of 291.

The Church also said goodbye to Rev. William Erbach who was completing his second year of service in May. Erbach was returning to his home state of New Jersey where he was being assigned a Church of his own.

#### REV. JOYCE COMES TO EPWORTH

Rev. Kelly Wilson, Jr. was succeeded by Rev. Johnnie L. Joyce. Rev. and Mrs. Joyce and their three children, Robert, Geraldine, and Johnnie Jr., came to Epworth after three years in Garner. There was contagious enthusiasm in the new minister. He was easy to get



to know, easy to talk to. He had a way of moving people to action, thinking that it was their own idea. He enjoyed a joke, and could tell some right good ones himself. In short, he was a preacher, and he enjoyed his work. He arrived at Epworth at the height of our Children's Building program.

Tentative completion date of the new building had been set for September, but it was quite obvious to Ed Scholtes, Church School Superintendent as well as everyone else, that it would never be ready for the overflow attendance that would come in the fall.

So Scholtes, who had succeeded John E. Reynolds as Superintendent the previous year, had to start counting heads again. Somehow or other, he managed to double up and squeeze them in, but the arrangement would only be temporary.

#### CHILDREN'S BUILDING COMPLETED

Date for the opening of the new Children's Building (Cost: approximately \$55,000) was finally set for Thanksgiving morning, Thursday, November 23, 1961. It was to be a part of the annual Thanksgiving Service and fellowship breakfast, a custom which was started back in 1955. Taking part in the service in addition to the minister and the superintendent was Dr. Barclift, district superintendent, and Clay Turner, the newly assigned assistant pastor from Duke Divinity School. It was another great occasion for the Church.

#### EARLY WORSHIP STARTED

Still another sign of growth came on March 4, when Rev. Joyce preached his first 9 o'clock service. The service proved so popular

that it has been continued ever since. Each Sunday since March of 1962, the Church has had a 9 o'clock service followed by Church School at 9:45 AM, and the regular morning worship at 11 o'clock. Attendance at the early service has been as high as 100 worshippers.

A departure from the annual every-member-canvas in the spring of 1962 was the barbecue and brunswick stew supper held at Turnage's, a favorite barbecue spot in Durham. All members and their families were guests of the Church. It was well attended and most enjoyed, and the results showed up in the pledges received.

At the Annual Conference in 1962, the Church reported another 27 new members, offset by a loss of 11. Net membership total - 307. Rev. Joyce was returned for his second year.

#### MORE LOTS PURCHASED

The first order of business of the new Official Board was to take another good look at the ever-increasing number of members with a thought to the future. The house and lots at the southwest corner of the Church could be purchased. But was it a good move? The Official Board felt that it was, and on July 29, the Church purchased the house and land for \$16,500.

#### WOMAN'S SOCIETY FORMS TWO CIRCLES

Since the early years of the Church, the Woman's Society of Christian Service had been a strong and active group. As the Church grew, so did the Society. For fellowship purposes, the Society, on September 30, 1962, formed two circles - one a daytime circle, the other meeting at night. This gave the ladies a choice of fellowship meetings in addition to the regular monthly meetings

of the entire Society.

In October, 1962, the Church obtained the services of Mrs. C. C. Bartholomew as choir director. During the next two years, music came to be a vital and enjoyable part of most of the Church services and functions. Mrs. Bartholomew, with some good help from Dr. Bartholomew, gave the Church a well-rounded program of music.

#### NEW ADULT CLASS FORMED

Shortly after the beginning of Rev. Joyce's second year, he discovered a large potential membership among young married couples in the area. Their reluctance to join Epworth had been the one adult Sunday School Class for all ages. Some of the younger adult Sunday School members met in the early fall to discuss the possibilities of a second adult class, and agreed it was needed. The group held its organizational meeting the first Sunday in November, 1962. Adults of all ages interested in a discussion-type class were invited, but it was soon clear that the new class would consist mostly of younger adults. The original name of the class, Adult Fellowship Class, was later changed to Christian Fellowship Class. Up to now, the Class has had no formal teacher. Class discussion is conducted by one of its members.

#### SECOND COLLEGE CRUSADE

As was pointed out earlier, the first College Crusade had not been a total success. What to do about the needs of the Methodist Colleges had been a thorn in the side of the Conference for the past two years. But the Conference, meeting in a special session, voted in favor of a second Crusade. Epworth's fair share for this

campaign was set at \$8,000. William W. Rankin served as chairman. Again, the members pledged their quota. Final results of the campaign would not be known for four more years.

#### CHURCH MEMBERS GROWING UP

Another unmistakable sign of changing times in the Church was noted and enjoyed at the last Sunday Morning Worship service held in 1962. Sixteen college students of Epworth families had returned home for the holidays. Many members recalled seven years previous when the Church had only one teen-ager, Carlotta Satterfield, who had to be satisfied with sitting in the Adult Class. Now, on this Sunday, the service was completely in the hands of our young college group. Those taking an active role in the morning service were Geraldine Joyce, Jeanette Massey, Nancy Githens, Carolyn Randall, Annette Massey, Rannie Jo Pendergrass, Randy Marshall, and Anita Randall.

The New Year 1963 found everything running with relative smoothness. Troubles with the parsonage came through with timely regularity, and the Official Board would hasten to take some stop-gap measures as talk was revived about a new parsonage. Attendance at Sunday School on February 19 was 212, a new record as of that date. And in May, Clay Turner, having completed Duke Divinity School, was leaving Epworth. During the past two years, Clay and his wife, Jane, had become most devoted to the Church and its members. Everyone, particularly the young people with whom they had worked so closely, agreed that some Church was in for a fine pastor. Great things were predicted for Rev. Turner.

All in all, the year ending might be considered one of the better years in the history of the Church. It was certainly one of many and varied activities, and the Official Board had been most active. New members for the year totaled 43 with a loss of only six. Total net membership, 344. The new district superintendent was O. L. Hathaway.

The 13th year of the Church got off to a fast start. One reason for this may have been that Dr. Sherwood Githins, Jr., was re-elected to his second year as chairman of the Official Board. At the meeting in July, the Official Board voted to henceforth elect all Board officers for two-year terms. The number one project for the year was parsonage repairs. The Board also asked that a committee be named to make recommendations for building a new parsonage. (It began to look as if the writing of the second 13-year history of the Church might be uncomplicated if a new parsonage could be acquired.)

In September, 1963, James B. Ferrell was named Sunday School Superintendent to succeed Ed Scholtes who was resigning after two years. The job as it stood was a tough one. Scholtes had done a good job.

Also in September, Duke Divinity School supplied us with a new assistant pastor, George McFarland. As had been done before, Duke paid one-half the small salary for the assistant, the Church paid the other.

#### IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

At the September meeting of the Official Board, the group listed the four most needed improvements for the Church. They were

as follows: (1) Paving for the Parking Lot, (2) Garden Wall, (3) A Choir Box, (4) A New Parsonage! (The exclamation point is that of the secretary of the Board, not the writer's.)

#### METHODIST MEN

October, 1963 saw the organization of the Epworth group of Methodist Men. The organizational meeting was held on October 16. Thirty-four men of the congregation were present. Among other business, a nominating committee was named, and at the next meeting in November, the following officers were installed. A. J. Crosby, president; H. A. Owens, vice president; Fred Steele, Jr., secretary; Jack Sessoms, treasurer; and M. S. McKibben, publicity.

Also in October, 1963, the Official Board approved a motion that the Trustees be authorized to act on the following: (1) Closing Cambridge Street, the street which runs down the side of the Church lot, (2) Paving Parking Lot, (3) Adding partitions and doors on second floor of Children's Building to provide more Sunday School rooms, (4) Enlargement of choir space, (5) Proceed with building wall and garden and take care of necessary financing required. A cost of \$15,000 for all improvements was estimated.

No time was wasted on the choir space. By December a hole had been knocked in the right side of the sanctuary wall which adjoined a Sunday School room. Thus, the choir could enter in splendor through its own door and occupy a suitable box in the front right corner of the Church. It was greeted with a healthy majority if not unanimous approval.

Also by December, new partitions for the second floor of the

Children's Building had been added. The Sunday School could use them. Superintendent Ferrell had already announced that starting in September the Sunday School would have a class corresponding to each year in school.

Early in the New Year, 1963, signs of other improvements began to show up. Carpets were needed for the class rooms in the main building. In no time at all, the carpets were there. This was so typical of dozens of projects taken on by Mike May over the years. His stock answer to a question - "Don't worry about it". Few people did when Mike said it.

One of the most talked about projects ever to be undertaken by the Church was "The Wall" which was started in the Spring of 1963. For some time a few of the members had recommended that the sides of the sanctuary be made into formal gardens enclosed by a wall. Officially approved by the Board the past October, construction of "The Wall" had been started at the beginning of the year, with no explanation to the general membership. As "The Wall" grew higher and higher, some members suggested a roof to solve the classroom problem. Passersby watched the progress with curiosity. Children who liked Epworth, "because you can look out the windows during preaching", fretted. It was too early at the end of the fiscal year to know what the final reaction would be. The "formal gardens" were still barren stockades of baked clay. One thing the membership did learn. At a meeting of the Official Board in May when all interested members of the Church were issued a special invitation to attend, they were told that the improvements in progress would add another \$17,000 debt to the Church. All in all, the Church

was in need of some \$85,000-\$90,000 to be debt free. Another capital funds campaign was suggested.

It's often been said that a Church out of debt will soon begin to wither and die. Epworth could take renewed hope. There was a long life ahead.

By the same token, the Official Board didn't want to add too much longevity at the moment. They voted down a proposal earlier in the year to investigate the purchase of the Woolbright home and lot adjoining the Church lot. It was agreed that no action would be taken for the present.

In other areas, the Church was making great strides. The Membership and Evangelism Committee reported a most successful year. The Boy Scouts appearing at the Spring Camporee, with Charles Brackett as their Scout Master, had walked off with all the honors. The boys basketball teams organized the past fall had shown up well in the Church Leagues. Activities and participation at the Church was at an all-time high.

#### DAN SHARPE BIBLE CLASS

On Sunday, May 10, 1964, the adult class, which had all through the years been known as "The Adult Class", got around to selecting a name. Many names had been suggested. A committee had been chosen to review the recommendations. Two names were submitted to the Class. "Alpha Bible Class" and "Dan Sharpe Bible Class", in honor of Rev. Dan Sharpe. The result? As of May 10, the name would be "Dan Sharpe Bible Class".



#### PARKING LOT PAVED

On Sunday, May 17, those who attended Sunday services were thrilled by a paved parking lot. It was particularly popular with the ladies who had for all these years kicked out hundreds of heels on the rocks in the parking areas. It also proved to be a new meeting place for little people on bikes and other wheel goods.

#### NEW PARSONAGE

And to cap it all off, Mrs. Mike May, reporting for the parsonage committee, announced that a house suitable for the parsonage had been located. A motion was passed to the effect that if the water and sewage situation was found to be satisfactory, and if the house met all the requirements of the District Locations Committee, the Epworth Quarterly Conference, and the congregation, the Church should proceed with all possible speed to purchase same. This they did. On May 24, 1964 the members, at a meeting following the morning worship service, voted to purchase the house at 3509 Mossdale Avenue for the new Church parsonage. Gilbert Klein, financial secretary, could get back to his debits.

As Rev. Joyce packed for his trip to the Annual Conference, he was armed with some impressive figures. During the past year, the Church had added 65 new members, the largest single year in the history of Epworth. The total membership now stood at 389. Sunday School enrollment was at an alltime high - 299. The operating budget for the coming year had been set at a whopping \$26,810. And some minister would be returning to an attractive new parsonage with water in the well and not in the basement.

It was pretty obvious most of the members hoped the pastor for the coming year would be Rev. Joyce.

End of the "First Thirteen Years".

GROWTH OF EPWORTH METHODIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP BY FISCAL YEARS  
TAKEN FROM OFFICIAL CHURCH ROLL

<u>YEARS</u>	<u>TOTAL GROSS</u>	<u>ANNUAL GROSS</u>	<u>ANNUAL LOSS</u>	<u>ANNUAL NET</u>	<u>GROSS LOSS</u>	<u>TOTAL NET</u>
Nov. 1951 - Oct. 1952	11	11	0	11	0	11
Nov. 1952 - Oct. 1953	18	7	0	18	0	18
Nov. 1953 - Oct. 1954	60	42	2	40	2	58
Nov. 1954 - June 1955*	85	25	0	25	2	83
July 1955 - June 1956	137	52	6	46	8	129
July 1956 - June 1957	197	60	8	52	16	181
July 1957 - June 1958	230	33	8	25	24	206
July 1958 - June 1959	250	20	15	15	39	211
July 1959 - June 1960	296	46	18	28	57	239
July 1960 - June 1961	353	57	15	42	72	281
July 1961 - June 1962	380	27	11	16	83	297
July 1962 - June 1963	424	44	6	38	89	335
July 1963 - June 1964	489**	65	11	54	100***	389****

- \* Annual Conference fiscal year changed from November 1 to July 1
- \*\* Disagrees with Gross Total in Church Record by three, 492
- \*\*\* Disagrees with Gross Loss in Church Record by 4, 104
- \*\*\*\* Disagrees with report to Annual Conference in June 1964.

NOTE: Differences above are due to one death with date unrecorded, one member who became affiliated with Church, moved membership and then came back, and two members who joined and then left with no record of either. These discrepancies will try to be corrected for the final official history.

## APPENDIX

It was the original idea to list, down through the years, all members who served as chairmen of the Official Board, the various Commissions and committees, presidents of classes, and Sunday School division heads. Thus far, we have been able to complete only a few of these categories. Information and memory has been so spotty that a correct listing of many of these has been impossible. Those for which we have fairly complete and accurate information are listed below:

### BISHOP

Dr. Paul N. Garber

### DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

1951-1953 Dr. E. L. Hillman  
1953- Dr. W. L. Clegg  
1958-1963 Dr. C. D. Barclift  
1963- Dr. O. L. Hathaway

### PASTORS

1951-1952 Carl B. Newton  
1952-1953 Henry Pollock  
Oct. 1953 Frank Grill  
1953-1957 Dan W. Sharpe  
1957-1961 Kelly Wilson, Jr.  
1961- Johnnie L. Joyce

### ASSISTANT PASTORS

1954-1957 Robert Regan  
1957-1959 Merle K. Frank  
1959-1961 William Erbach  
1961-1963 Clay Turner  
1963-1964 George McFarland

### CHAIRMEN, OFFICIAL BOARD

1951-1952 Wilson W. Hopkins  
1952-1953 Wilson W. Hopkins  
1953-1954 Wilson W. Hopkins  
1954-1955 Wilson W. Hopkins  
July to Nov. '55 - C. S. Woods  
Nov. '55-56 - Ed S. Yarbrough, Jr.  
1956-1957 Ed S. Yarbrough, Jr.  
1957-1958 Elisha M. Herndon  
1958-1959 Elisha M. Herndon  
1959-1960 O. D. King  
1960-1961 M. S. McKibben  
1961-1962 John E. Reynolds  
1962-1963 Dr. Sherwood Githins, Jr.  
1963-1964 Dr. Sherwood Githins, Jr.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

1952-1954 Mrs. C. S. Woods  
1954-1961 John E. Reynolds  
1961-1963 Ed Scholtes  
1963-1964 James B. Ferrell

### PRESIDENTS, WOMAN'S SOCIETY

1954-1955 Mrs. B. J. Campbell  
1955-1956 Mrs. R. H. Sales  
1956-1957 Mrs. R. H. Sales  
1957-1958 Mrs. Gilbert Klein  
1958-1959 Mrs. W. J. Harris  
1959-1960 Mrs. Sherwood Githins, Jr.  
1960-1961 Mrs. Sherwood Githins, Jr.  
1961-1962 Mrs. Mike May  
1962-1963 Mrs. Mike May  
1963-1964 Mrs. W. C. Moore

### PRESIDENTS, DAN SHARPE BIBLE CLASS

1955-1956 Louis A. Jones  
1956-1957 Dr. Charles E. Llewellyn, Jr.  
1957-1958 J. E. Sessoms  
1958-1959 A. M. Bloodworth  
1959-1960 William E. Stauber  
1960-1961 Frank Fairey  
1961-1962 John W. Franklin  
1962-1963 Gordon L. Carpenter

### PRESIDENTS, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CLASS

1962 - Cliff C. Marshall  
1963 - Dr. John Lane  
1963 - Jack Bergstrom  
1964 - Don Wampler

### ORGANISTS

1951-1953 (No regular organist)  
1953-1958 Mrs. N. P. Alexander  
1958-1963 Mrs. Charles E. Llewellyn, Jr.  
1963-1964 Miss Carolyn Sherman

### CHOIR DIRECTORS

1953-1957 (No regular director)  
1957-1958 Mrs. Ronald Sondee  
1958-1960 Ed Hardin  
1960-1962 Jim Fowler  
1962- Mrs. C. C. Bartholomew  
(During many of the later years, Dr. Githins filled in on many occasions)

