

Fair Bluff Methodist Church which celebrates its Homecoming and Loyalty Day on Sunday, October 14th, has a rich heritage equaled by few and surpassed by even less.

The early circuit rider traveling on his faithful horse with saddlebags, hymn-book and Bible, found the settlement and preached the Word of God here long before an actual Church building took shape. It is known that the Rev. John Oliver, Pastor of Olivet Church in Marietta whose Church and Sunday School was established at least as early as 1817, waded the swamp waters of the flats of Lumber river swamp to preach to a few gathered for services in Fair Bluff.

It is known that services were held for at least 5 years by the Methodist people before the arrival of an appointed Pastor. The Rev. Norman A. H. Goddin, the first Pastor, began his work by preaching in the Masonic Hall in 1855 because there was no church building in the settlement. On February 9, 1856, at the quarterly conference session in Whiteville, the charge reported \$5.00 paid on the Pastor's salary. Two years later the same conference session at Carver's Creek, James M. McGowan was elected steward for Fair Bluff. That year Fair Bluff issued it's first invitation to the conference to meet with them the following year, 1859, and was accepted.

At this historic session a building committee was appointed, the beginning of a church at Fair Bluff. The building committee consisted of Augustus Smith, Sr., Burrell Smith, A. L. Drake and W. H. Smith. The original deed is dated August 8, 1859. A tract of land on Fillmore Street was deeded by Augustus Smith to Fair Bluff Methodist Church. The historic old frame structure erected thereon was considered one of the finest churches in this section, and served it's church family until 1914 when it was removed to make way for original part of the present building.

In 1914 the present building began to take shape under the guidance of the committee composed of A. W. Jenkins, S. C. Scott, C. B. Martin, R. B. Williams and F.B. Van Sant, J. B. Williams, who was added later, and the Pastor, The Rev. W. C. Martin, also helped to steer this effort to a successful conclusion, the first brick church in Columbus County.

The dedication of this imposing new structure was held on January 14, 1920, with Bishop V. M. Darlington, giving the dedicatory sermon. It is noted that the text chosen was Ps 8: 7-2, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob", and was dwelt on for more than one hour. The building was presented for dedication by the trustees, S. C. Scott, J. H. Turner, J. B. Williams and C. B. Martin.

The Fair Bluff church was first a member of the Whiteville Circuit, then of the Evergreen Circuit and of the Chadbourn Circuit. Finally, a Fair Bluff charge was established consisting of Fair Bluff, Cerro Gordo and Olivet. in 1955 Fair Bluff became a station.

In 1947 a program of renovation and improvement began under the leadership of the Rev. J. W. Lineberger, and a building committee composed of W. A. Bracey, J. J. Taylor, I. M. Scott, J. P. Waddell, H. A. Turner and Mrs. R. C. Tucker. In excess of \$20,000 was raised and used to enlarge the original church and render it one of the most beautiful small churches in the N. C. Conference. I. M. Scott and H. E. Floyd saw to it that the grounds were improved to enhance the spaciousness of the complete picture.

In 1948, the congregation of the Fair Bluff Church out of the love of their hearts, purchased a Comsonato electric organ, with a portion of the bequest left to the church by the late F. A. Turner of Istanbul, Turket honoring his parents Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Turner, added the Turner Memorial Chimes.

In 1949, June, the Fair Bluff charge consisting of Fair Bluff, Olivet, (Marietta) and Cerro Gordo, was formed. The three churches immediately turned their efforts to a Parsonage. Through the efforts of the three congregations and under the leadership of a building committee composed of Weldon Harrington, W. M. Oliver (Olivet) Alfred Williams, Hugh Nance (Cerro Gordo) H. E. Floyd, I. M. Scott, J. L. Minton (Fair Bluff) and the Pastor, Rev. Gene Purcell, Jr., a lovely eight-room residence was completed. Also at about this time extensive repairs and painting was done on the church.

In the latter years, within the realm of our memories, a few other dates stand out to emblazon the faith and the love with which we strive for a lovelier, nobler physical plant to house this great spiritual church that has never, nor will ever, accept defeat. Our present Pastor arrived on Jan. 19, 1960, and the days since then have seen the dawning of three great dates. In June of 1960 the Methodist Men's Club sponsored the drive to provide air conditioning in the sanctuary and the then existing Sunday School rooms. In March of the same year under the leadership of the building committee composed of Pierce Dalton, Dr. M. A. Waddell, I. M. Scott, Paul Scott, J. R. Rabon, Mrs. H. A. Turner and Mrs. H.E. Floyd,

plans were proposed and adopted for the spacious new educational building. By promotions day in October of 1960, this was completed and the Sunday School occupied it's new quarters.

Thus it would seem that the same spirit of love, sacrifice and devotion that prompted the early efforts of this great church, which has known 56 Pastors, continues to flow as surely and purposefully as the dark waters of Lumber River wending its way to the great ocean. So may the labors and sacrifices of those of the past, present and future find a hallowed place in the archives of Heaven.

Among the Pastors serving Fair Bluff Methodist Church from its beginning through the present are the following:

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| Rev. Norman A. H. Godwin (served twice)                                    | Rev. W. A. Forbes       |
| Rev. C. M. Pepper  | Rev. W. H. Townsend     |
| Rev. Oscar J. Brent  | Rev. A. R. Raven        |
| Rev. G. W. Heptinstall   | Rev. A. S. Barnes       |
| Rev. Caswell W. King   | Rev. J. T. Draper       |
| Rev. Thomas J. Gattis  | Rev. R. F. Taylor       |
| Rev. James C. Brent  | Rev. F. G. Eure         |
| Rev. G. K. Andrews   | Rev. T. H. Bain         |
| Rev. Jonathan H. Dobby   | Rev. W. C. Martin       |
| Rev. John W. Jenkins (later founder of Methodist Children's Home, Raleigh) | Rev. D. L. Earnhardt    |
| Rev. R. P. Bibb  | Rev. T. M. Daniels      |
| Rev. J. B. Alford  | Rev. G. R. Jordan       |
| Rev. W. M. D. Moore  | Rev. B. E. Stanfield    |
| Rev. W. H. Kirton  | Rev. B. O. Merritt      |
| Rev. W. B. Maness  | Rev. W. C. Chaffin      |
| Rev. Max H. Hoyle  | Rev. Hocutt             |
| Rev. J. B. Bailey  | Rev. T. E. Davis        |
| Rev. Phillip Greening  | Rev. Freeman Heath      |
| Rev. J. T. Lyon  | Rev. M. W. Lawrence     |
| Rev. J. W. Randall   | Rev. Belton Joyner, Sr. |
| Rev. J. J. Corden  | Rev. E. C. Maness       |
| Rev. J. W. Puett   | Rev. W. L. Loy          |
| Rev. C. W. Smith   | Rev. J. W. Lineberger   |
| Rev. J. M. Downum  | Rev. Chester Andrews    |
| Rev. J. C. Crisp   | Rev. E. G. Purcell, Jr. |
| Rev. T. J. Browning  | Rev. Charles B. Long    |
| Rev. H. M. Eure  | Rev. Fred Davis         |
| Rev. C. W. Smith (served three times)                                      | Rev. Neil Thompson      |

*Lee Phillips*  
*Rev. J. H. Parrish*

Several worthy local preachers filled regular appointments here, though not sent here by the conference. Among these Rev. John Oliver, Rev. J. H. Tart and Rev. John Gaddy.