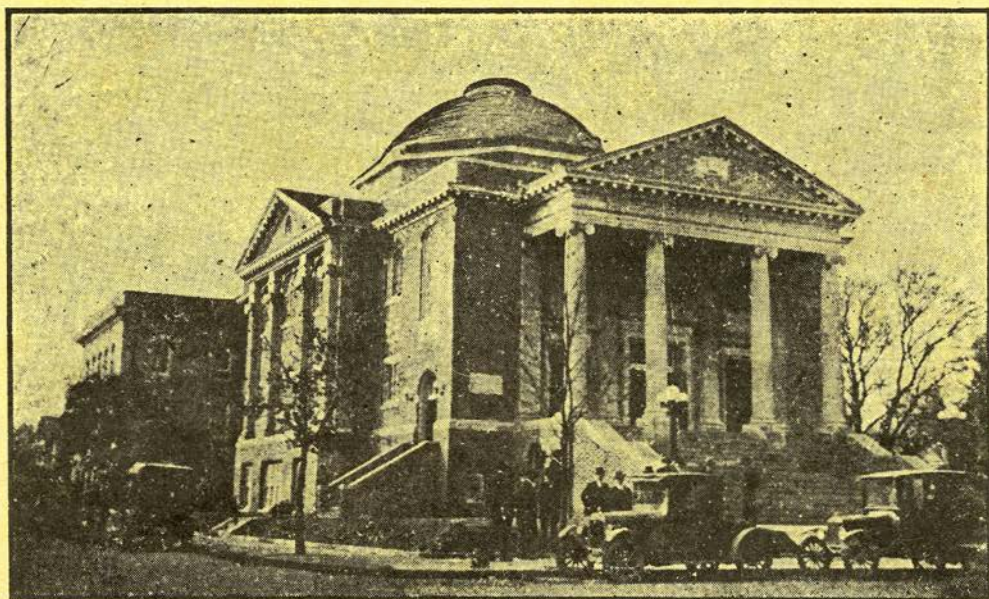


**THE HISTORY, MINISTERS, AND PROGRAM
OF THE
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
OF
ELIZABETH CITY, N.C.**



THE HISTORY OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH*

A complete history of any Christian church is surely two-dimensional. Thus the first historical dimension of First United Methodist Church, Elizabeth City, N.C., includes that which is invisible, inaudible, incomprehensible, and untouchable. The first dimension is the spiritual history of the church. This side of history cannot be researched, documented, or evaluated by accomplished or aspiring historians. In fact it forever remains outside the grasp of all historians. Only the God of all history, the God of the Church, the God of this church, knows this side of First Church's story -- for He has been, is, and will be its covert history-maker. The second dimension of the past of First Church involves the stuff that we expect of written history -- dates and eras, events and trends, sermons and theologies, wars and peace, tragedies and security. It is to this side of history that we will presently turn. But even as we do, let us not forget that perhaps the most important words about our church's history can neither be written nor spoken, for they are bound up in the tremendous mystery and hidden grace of God.

The seed of First United Methodist Church was planted on December 1, 1782. On that day Edward Dromgoole and Jesse Lee, two Methodist movement preachers, arrived in Edenton, N.C. to begin organizing a Methodist circuit that would cover much of northeastern North Carolina. Soon the Camden Circuit emerged with one of its congregations located in Elizabeth City. By today's standards the Elizabeth City congregation was, for years, small and struggling. Not until well into the nineteenth century did the congregation claim 100 members (in 1828 total membership was 118). For almost five decades (1782-1828) the congregation was without a church building; it was forced to worship each Sunday in the Court House on the southeast corner of Main and Road Streets. Also during its buildingless period the congregation did not have a preacher of its own. It relied on circuit riders for its sermons. After preaching in the river city in 1804, Francis Asbury, the father of American Methodism, wrote: "At the Court House in Elizabeth City, Pasquotank County, I preached upon Matthew 7:7-11. Many heard but few felt....This place is beautiful for its land and water prospects, and the situation is good for trade." Asbury sensed an unsureness of Christian enthusiasm in the Elizabeth City congregation and foretold a bright economic future for the Elizabeth City area. His statement will forever be on the collective mind of this church.

In 1828, after existing for 46 years (1782-1828) on circuits and charges with other churches, the Methodist congregation of Elizabeth City became a station church. That is, in 1828 the church received, for the first time in its history, its own minister. The same year that the Reverend James Morrison, the church's first full-time minister, moved to town, his congregation moved into its first church building. Located on the southeast corner of Church and Poole Streets, the first structure to house the church was only one story. Later the building was elevated, and a Sunday School room was built beneath it. Until 1857 this station church was led by a different minister every year; the three exceptions to this rule were Reverend William Read (1846-7), Reverend John Doll (1850-3), and Reverend James Spencer (1856-7). The first three decades of station status brought one new building and 26 different ministers to the church.

1857 was the year in which the second church building was constructed. On East Church Street it was built adjacent to the original edifice, which was later sold and moved. The building was dedicated while it hosted the 1857 Virginia Annual Conference, to which the Elizabeth City congregation belonged. The era of the church's past which found its stage in this building was uniquely though partially revealed by these words from the minutes of a "regular meeting of the official members of the Elizabeth City Station of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South:"

Brother Kennedy reported that he had rented a house from G.D. Knox for the parsonage at \$150 per annum. It was ordered that brother Stanley (the minister) be allowed \$1,000 a year for quarterage, traveling, and family expenses. It was ordered that Jacob Spellman be employed as sexton and to cut the minister's wood at a salary of \$100 a year.

When the necessities of economics (and especially the economics of injustice--see Mr. Spellman's salary above) and conflict over states' rights led the South and the North to the battlefields of the Civil War, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South of Elizabeth City had no minister. Just five years after the dedication of a new building the church was without ministerial leadership. Until the end of the war this condition persisted. As decades after the war passed, the building was improved and renovated. Around 1872 a new church bell replaced the old cracked one, in 1893 the side balconies of the sanctuary were removed and the same year the choir loft was built above and behind the pulpit. If the church building was changing gradually, the church's conference affiliation was altered radically: in 1895 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South of Elizabeth City, left the Virginia Conference and joined the North Carolina Conference. From 1857 until 1921 over 30 Methodist ministers manned the helm of the Elizabeth City church. Truly itineracy, strictly interpreted, was still fashionable!

By the end of the Great War (WW I) the congregation had again outgrown its house. In 1911 total church membership stood at 525; by 1916 membership was 606 (with 8 adults recently baptized and 64 on "Cradle Roll!"); the promise of a new building pushed the roll to 762 (in one quarter 57 received on profession of faith and 25 adults baptized); early 1919 had 830 on the roll; and 900 was broken before the new building was dedicated. The twentieth-century building's cornerstone was laid on September 26, 1919, and just over two years later the first sermon in the new building was preached in the Church School auditorium. The congregation heard the first sermon in its new sanctuary in September, 1922. At least one sermon every week from 1922 until the present has been preached in the sanctuary (around 3,000 sermons). Local building expansion paralleled national denominational merger, for in 1939 the Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South formed the Methodist Church. From the merger came the new name of the local church -- First Methodist Church. First Church purchased the Sanderlin Building, which is located on the southeast corner of Road and Fearing Streets, on January 7, 1944. The Service Center, as it was called, served as a recreation center for military personnel, as temporary classrooms for the Church School, as a meeting place for Alcoholics Anonymous, as an arts and crafts studio by the College of the Albemarle, and as a storage area for the church. In more recent years a parsonage was completed (1956); and the final phase of the Church School

project was completed (1976). When the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren joined to form the United Methodist Church in 1968, the name of the church became First United Methodist Church. In the last 50 years many ministers have served First Church, but the pace of ministerial itineracy has slowed from a gallop to a trot: since 1922 ministers average 3.6 years at the church. To this day the title -- First United Methodist Church -- is attached to the building that stands at Road and Church Streets, to the ministers that have served it faithfully, to the congregation that actually is the church, and to a heritage that is still unfolding.

* A word of thanks and acknowledgment is due to those who researched, compiled, wrote, typed, and printed the "History of the First United Methodist Church -- Elizabeth City, North Carolina" as found in the **History and Directory of First United Methodist Church -- Elizabeth City, North Carolina** (Fall 1972). You are the ones who made the above possible.

MINISTERS APPOINTED TO FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FROM 1828 UNTIL 1978

The ministers who served at the Church and Poole Streets building were:

Reverend James Morrison	Reverend Joseph F. Askey
Reverend Henry I. Evans	Reverend James D. Coulby
Reverend Vernon Eskridge	Reverend Thomas H. Jones
Reverend James Dey	Reverend Richard B. Hope
Reverend Stephen W. Jones	Reverend Isaac A. Willis
Reverend LeRoy M. Lee	Reverend W. W. Kennedy
Reverend John Kerr	Reverend William Read
Reverend John W. White	Reverend P.F. August
Reverend Joshua Leigh	Reverend W.G. Cross
Reverend James A. Riddick	Reverend John A. Doll
Reverend Joseph Lear	Reverend William J. Norfleet
Reverend Thomas S. Hoyle	Reverend W.J. Dalby
Reverend George W. Langhore	Reverend James L. Spencer, D.D.

The ministers who served at the second East Church Street building were:

Reverend Frank Stanley	Reverend W.J. Twitty
Reverend W.L. Berry	Reverend D.P. Willis
Reverend W.W. Duncan	Reverend J.T. Whitley
Reverend C.C. Pearson	Reverend J.H. Wilson
Reverend W.W. Dalby	Reverend E.M. Jordon
Reverend J.H. Amiss	Reverend J.H. Stiff
Reverend J. Fisher	Reverend J.H. Hall
Reverend C.V. Bungley	Reverend R.C. Beamon
Reverend W.P. Wright	Reverend D.H. Tuttle
Reverend S.S. Lambeth	Reverend A.P. Tyer
Reverend George E. Booker	Reverend L.E. Thompson
Reverend James W. Martin	Reverend J.D. Bundy
Reverend W.M. McGee	Reverend J.C. Wooten
Reverend Frank Woodard	Reverend G.F. Smith
Reverend R.A. Compton	Reverend J.L. Cuninggim

The ministers who served at the Road and Church Streets building were:

Reverend J.M. Ormond
Reverend Dr. N.H.D. Wilson
Reverend F.S. Love
Reverend G.T. Bond
Reverend G.W. Perry
Reverend H.I. Glass
Reverend H.K. King
Reverend H.L. Hendricks
Reverend A.P. Brantley
Reverend Marquis W. Lawrence
Reverend Robert L. Jerome

Reverend O. Kelly Ingram
Reverend Vergil E. Queen
Reverend Carlos Womack
Reverend G. Robert McKenzie
Reverend William A. Seawell
Reverend J. Kern Ormond
Reverend Woodrow W. Wells, Associate
Reverend Charles E. McKenzie, Associate
Reverend C. Clyde Tucker
Reverend Paul T. Stallworth, Associate

THE PROGRAM OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH*

The present program of the church is composed of groups, organizations, institutions, and events through which interested persons can serve the church -- or be served by it. Covering a wide range of activities, the program includes all ages of participants. If your desire is sufficiently strong, you can involve yourself in any of the following groups or activities.

- A. **The Worship Service.** The Sunday morning service is the most important event that occurs in the church each week. Beginning at 11:00 a.m., the service is broadcast on the AM radio station WGAI of Elizabeth City. A Nursery is provided for very young children and Children's Church for elementary school children. Special worship services are held on Thanksgiving Day, on Christmas Eve, and during Holy Week. During some summer seasons an early service of worship (Sundays at 8:30 a.m.) is available. The Sunday worship hour gives life and depth to the remainder of the church's program. Without it other church activities lose their significance. With it church activities retain their Christian character.
- B. **The Musical Program: Choirs**
1. **Cherub Choir.** Each Sunday morning the Cherub Choir meets. Children who are 4 through 7 years of age are invited to attend. The group meets in the Kindergarten Room (Room 114) at 10:30 a.m. just to enjoy a fun time of 20 minutes of singing together.
 2. **Children's Choir.** Children in Third through Seventh Grades can sing in the Children's Choir. During the school year it practices in the Choir Room (Room 211) each Tuesday afternoon at 5:00. On occasion the Children's Choir performs during the 11:00 worship service on Sunday morning.
 3. **Adult Choir.** The Adult Choir practices each Wednesday evening at 8:00 in the Choir Room (Room 211) and sings at least one anthem each Sunday morning during worship. If interested in singing in the Adult Choir, please speak with Mr. Trueblood, the Organist-Choirmaster of the church.

C. **The Educational Program: Church School, V.C.S., and Special Programs.**

1. **Church School.** With the goal of stimulating exploration of the Christian faith, the Church School meets each Sunday morning between 9:30 and 10:30. It offers the following classes for children.

Nursery (Room 112)

Three-year-olds (Room 115)

Kindergarten (Room 114)

First-Second Grade (Room 316)

Third Grade (Room 305)

Fourth Grade (Room 309)

Fifth-Sixth Grade (Room 311)

The two youth classes are as follows.

Junior High Class (Room 312)

Senior High Class (Room 317)

Five adult classes are available.

Adult Study Class (Room 304)

Bailey Class (Room 213)

Fellowship Class (Room 225)

Men's Bible Class (Room 108)

Women's Bible Class (Room 222)

Occasionally the entire Church School will meet in one general assembly (e.g., on Promotion Sunday, for special speakers, and for church-wide films/filmstrips.)

2. **Vacation Church School (or V.C.S.).** Each year during June, Vacation Church School is conducted. Activities are provided for children of Nursery Age through Sixth Grade. V.C.S. usually lasts for one week (Monday through Friday) and for three hours each morning (9:00-12:00). All children are invited to attend.
3. **Special Programs.** During the church year special Sunday evening programs are offered intermittently. These programs are usually educational in nature. They often concern Christian missions, involve guest speakers, and/or revolve around an outstanding film/filmstrip. Covered dish suppers are often a part of the special programs.

- D. **The Youth Program: U.M.Y.F.** During the school year the United Methodist Youth Fellowship (or the U.M.Y.F.) meets regularly on Sunday afternoons at 5:30. It shares together a snack supper and enjoys a program. Our group is composed of Junior High and Senior High students who desire Christian fellowship and interesting activities. Each year the group creates a Halloween Carnival/Spook House, presents a Christmas pageant, looks forward to the spring "beach trip," conducts at least one service of Sunday morning worship, and attends meetings of the subdistrict (on the second Sunday of each month). All youth (young people 12-18 years of age) are encouraged to attend this fellowship.

- E. **The Women's Program: U.M.W.** The United Methodist Women (or U.M.W.) of the church meet the second Monday of every month. Striving for the knowledge of God, toward the experience of freedom in Jesus Christ, and to support Christian missions around the world, the U.M.W. have circle groups that meet in the morning and the evening. All women of the church and community are invited to participate in this vital part of the church.
- F. **District and Conference Activities.** Being a part of the connectional United Methodist Church means that First Church and its individual members can attend numerous events offered by the Elizabeth City District and the North Carolina Conference. Seminars, camps, workshops, tours, and other activities are available to you every year. Watch the weekly bulletin and the Social Hall's bulletin board for the details of these outstanding and diverse opportunities.
- G. **The Organizational Structure of the Church.** Through the board, council, and committees of the church, much of the actual work of the church is accomplished. Several of the more important and/or visible organizational bodies of the church are listed below. Like the programs mentioned above, those found below are niches in which different people can serve the church in different ways.

1. **Administrative Board.** The primary administrative body of the church is the Administrative Board. Its purpose is to initiate planning, receive reports, set goals, authorize action, determine policy, evaluate the church's ministries, and review the state of the church. Our board meets the first Monday after the first Sunday of every month.
2. **Council on Ministries (or C.O.M.).** The planning and programming group in the church is the Council on Ministries. It considers, initiates, develops, and coordinates proposals for the church's strategy for mission. Especially important on the C.O.M. are the Work Areas listed below.

Church and Society	Missions
Ecumenical Affairs	Religion and Race
Education	Stewardship
Evangelism	Worship

Age Level Coordinators (for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families), the Health and Welfare Chairperson, and representatives from other organizations within the church (e.g., the U.M.Y.F. and the U.M.W.) are also key members of the council.

3. **Committee on Finance.** Compiling an annual budget and developing plans which will raise sufficient income to meet the budget are the responsibilities of the Finance Committee.

4. **Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations.** This committee aids the church's ministers by being available for counsel, by keeping the ministers advised concerning conditions within the congregation as they affect relations between the ministers and the people, and by communicating to the people the nature and function of the pastoral office.
 5. **Committee on Church Property.** Caring for the cleanliness and maintenance of the property of the church is the responsibility of this committee.
 6. **Committee on Parsonage Property.** Providing for the upkeep of the church's parsonage and rented apartment is this committee's primary task.
 7. **Building Committee.** The Building Committee is assembled whenever a building project is undertaken. Presently the committee is developing plans to remodel the kitchen, the Fellowship Hall, and the offices of the church.
 8. **Trustees.** This is the official body with the responsibility for the acquisition, sale, maintenance, and management of church property.
- H. **The Financial Ministry of the Church.** A vital ministry of this church is its financial contribution to the greater Church. To support the mission of the church on the conference level it contributes its fair share to the N.C. Conference through the Single Figure Asking. Over 50% of the Single Figure goes to World Service and Conference Benevolences. Our church's missionary family is the Reverend and Mrs. Jack Theis, United Methodist missionaries serving in Seoul, South Korea. Each year our church, along with several others, financially assists the Theis's and their work in South Korea. During Lent an offering in coin folders is taken for the Theis's. Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, United Methodist Student Day, and World Communion are special days of the church that are observed with special offerings.
- I. **The Church Building Serves the Community.** The building of our church is used by many community organizations. For example, the Albemarle Players, a Boy Scout troop, two Brownie troops, the Tar Heel Squares, A.A., Al-A-Nons, the Coast Guard Officers' Wives, and the Coast Guard Wives' Bowling Team have recently used the church facilities. At times various choirs and musicians from outside the Elizabeth City area will perform in concert in the church's sanctuary.

First United Methodist Church has much to offer this community in general and you in particular. But you also have much to give to the church. As you have read the above, it is hoped that you have considered where you might

best participate. Perhaps you would like to sing, or teach, or learn, or camp, or serve as a church official -- whatever your plans are, make them clear to those who can assist you in fulfilling your role in this church's mission. And remember that First United Methodist Church, Elizabeth City, is always appreciative of your efforts.