

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

PEMBROKE, N. C.

"HOW THIS CHURCH CAME INTO BEING"

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH! We're glad you came to visit us. Come on in, and we'll give you a guided tour, along with the story of how this church came into being.

First, let's walk through the vestibule to the Sanctuary. It holds so many precious memories for so many different people who have worshipped here during the past 65 years!

Just have a seat on one of the pews. Or, if you prefer, walk on down to the altar. You may want to stand or kneel there, as so many others have done, and have a little talk with the Lord. This is His house, and He will meet you here.

Through the years, ever since the church building was completed, people coming into this sanctuary have had a variety of special experiences. There have been weddings, and funerals, and services dedicating young children to Christ and His Church.

But, for many, the most important time of all has been that life-changing experience of turning EVERYTHING (BODY, MIND, THOUGHTS, WORDS, FEELINGS, DESIRES, and PLANS, our ENTIRE being) over to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, God's Son.

As Protestant Christians, we believe that Christ is not only our personal Savior, but the only true "Head" of the Church universal. As we say in the "Apostles' Creed", we believe that the holy "catholic" (or universal church) includes every single local congregation truly organized in the name of Jesus Christ and dedicated to serving as His spiritual "Body" in this world.

Paul, the early apostle, writing to the church group at Corinth, described the Church as being Christ's body: "You are the body of Christ, and, individually, members one of another." (I Corinthians 12:27)

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

This particular local Christian church was organized as one unit of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The M. E. ("northern branch") remained separate until 1939, when all three branches of the former Methodist Church in America ---The Methodist Protestant, Methodist Episcopal, and the Methodist Episcopal, South--- reunited to become once again "The Methodist Church".

Later, in 1968, The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church came together to form the present "United Methodist Church".

EVERY PERSON IMPORTANT

Like all people everywhere, each man, woman, girl, boy and tiny baby who has ever entered this building is of unique importance and of utmost value to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ. However, there have been, a number of people who worked together to "pioneer" the way for us to worship here today.

D. F. LOWRY

One prominent local name will always be associated with Pembroke's First United Methodist church. It is Doctor Fuller (D. F.) Lowry. The large window at the front of the sanctuary, which shows Jesus going out into the byways in search of one lonely lost lamb, was presented "In Honor of D. F. Lowry". "Fuller" Lowry was the human organizer and first pastor of "First Methodist" Church. By the time this lovely stained glass window was placed behind the pulpit in his honor, he had served as pastor of this church for over 20 years. It was the zeal and dedication of D. F. Lowry which helped to bring First Methodist into being.

D. F. Lowry's son and daughter-in-law, Fred and Lucille Lowry, are still active in this church. Fred's stepmother, Mrs. Phelia Lowry, now a resident of Wesley Pines, attends First UMC whenever possible.

OTHER EARLY WORKERS

D. F. (Fuller) Lowry was not the only person interested in starting a centrally-located Methodist Episcopal Church for the people of the surrounding area. He organized a number of interested lay persons into a fellowship devoted to building such a central Indian Methodist congregation. Many descendants of these early workers are active in First Methodist church today.

Let's turn to the west wall of the sanctuary, lined with stained glass windows. The names on these windows represent some of the early families who helped this church to get its start.

DILL BLUE

Let's look at the window nearest the pulpit. It was presented in memory of Dill Blue, one of the faithful early workers. His daughter, Bernice Blue Lowry, explained that her father not only "kept books" but was a lay speaker when the pastor, D. F. Lowry, was preaching at one of the other churches under his charge. Because he sat on the left front pew, the left front window was chosen to honor him. His wife was Ada Blue. Members of their family are still active in this church today.

Dill Blue died in 1942. It was decided, some time after his death, to replace the clear glass sanctuary windows with stained glass windows.

REV. P. M. (MAHONEY) LOCKLEAR

The second window is dedicated to Rev. P. M. Locklear, another leader who helped to get the new congregation started. Like Rev. D. F. Lowry, he had moved from the local Holiness Methodist Conference to become a pastor in the Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference. While Mahoney was helping to pastor country churches in the surrounding area, his family attended First Methodist Church. One daughter, Zetta Locklear Lloyd, has recalled teaching Sunday School in this church during its early years. After Mahoney's death, his wife, Mary Catherine Hunt Locklear, continued to be actively involved with First Methodist Church. Their descendants are still active in this church.

TROY ROBERTS

Another early worker remembered by his family with a stained glass window was Troy Roberts. He helped Dill Blue "keep books". His widow, Cattie Oxendine Roberts, continued serving as an active member of this church after her husband's death. Their son, Troy, Jr., remembers his father working sweet

potatoes for E. L. Odum on this very same piece of land ---- before Mr. Odum sold it to the Methodist Episcopal Church for the present building.

MRS. J. L. (MOLLIE) OXENDINE

The fourth stained glass window honors Mrs. Jordan Oxendine, described as one of the "pillar attendants" of First Methodist Church. She may have been one of the faithful few who helped to start this congregation, even before they rented the first floor of a Lodge Hall across the street for a temporary meeting place. Mollie ran a dry goods store, next to the railroad track, near Pate's Supply Co.

JOHN R. LOWRY

After his death in the 1960's, another early church worker, John R. Lowry was honored with a stained glass window in his memory. For years John R. taught the "Bible Class" in this sanctuary. His wife, Stella, and Dill Blue's wife, Ada, were sisters. John R.'s widow, Stella, their daughter, Clara, and her husband, Lee, are still active members of First Methodist.

WINDOWS IN THE REAR OF THE SANCTUARY

Two small windows on either side of the central "W.S.C.S." window at the rear of the sanctuary were installed, without names, at the same time as the other stained glass sanctuary windows. Later these two windows were chosen by members of the family of Nancy Lowry Revels, one of D. F. Lowry's sisters. The window on the left was presented in honor of WINNIE LEE and JUDDIE REVELS, Sr., and in memory of RACHEAL REVELS, their daughter. The window on the right honors RAYMOND and ESTELLE (Revels) CLARK. Winnie Lee Revels and several of her children are still active members of this church.

REV. JAMES W. (Walter) SMITH

As we turn to walk out the sanctuary door, we see---at our immediate right---another stained glass window, this one in memory of Rev. Walter Smith. In 1925 Walter was listed as First Methodist Sunday School superintendent. However, for years, he served, along with P. M. Locklear and D. F. Lowry, as one of the early Indian ministers in the Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference, pastoring country churches outside of Pembroke. While he worked in rural churches, his wife, Lela Locklear Smith, was always faithful in attending First Methodist with their children. Smith family members have been active participants of this church, from its early days, down to the present.

HOW "FIRST METHODIST" CAME INTO BEING

In 1918 there were two Methodist conferences (the Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference and the local Lumber River Holiness Methodist Conference) serving the Robeson County Indians in a number of rural churches scattered throughout the countryside, around the town of Pembroke. The need for a centrally-located Indian Methodist Episcopal Church became apparent. This may have been a dream conceived by D. F. Lowry during his early years as a Methodist pastor. In any case, it was "Fuller" Lowry who spearheaded the drive to organize such a central church in or near the town of Pembroke.

LETTER FROM EARL LOWRY

Here are portions of a 1985 letter from D. F. Lowry's oldest son, Dr. Earl C. Lowry, a retired army physician living in Des Moines, Iowa:

Referring to his father, Dr. Earl wrote: "In 1913 he moved his membership

to Sandy Plains, and was ordained a minister. He ----- was assigned as many as three churches at one time. In 1918 he began the development of a plan to build a central Methodist Church at Pembroke."

A young man at the time, Earl Lowry served as secretary, writing down the name and amount each time a donation was made for the new church. In his letter, he explained: "I have in my possession a leather covered notebook owned by my Grandfather Rev. Calvin Lowry, which my Father used to record all donors and amounts contributed to build the church. More than 100 contributors over a period of four years are listed." Interestingly, one of the names is that of "A. W. McLean, Governor".

The 1922 Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference, Washington District report by W. A. Parsons includes this paragraph:

"Pembroke is at the heart of our work among the Indians. D. F. Lowry rented a hall and held services on Sabbath evenings most of the year. A Sunday School has been started, and a nucleus of church members gathered. We have made part payment on a desirable church lot alongside the State Normal School property. Here is one of the finest opportunities of the Methodist Episcopal Church in this State."

A CHANGE IN PLANS

The first location chosen for the site of this central church must have seemed ideal at the time. D. F. Lowry's older brother, Billy, who had deeded a piece of land for the Normal School in its present location as Old Main building, furnished an adjoining piece of land for the new church.

Dr. Clifton Oxendine explained that a foundation had once been poured between the present buildings of Old Main and Sampson Hall. However, there was a change in plans, perhaps because "Old Main" was in the process of being built as a large two-story brick building for the Normal School.

In 1923 building of this church began on the present site, on land bought from E. L. Odum.

EARLY CHURCH MEMBERS

The church membership book shows the following names of the earliest members of First Methodist Episcopal Church:

1922

Peppers Mahoney Locklear
Mary C. Locklear
Lydia Locklear
Doctor Fuller Lowry
Jessie Mae Lowry
Kermit Lowry
Willie Martin
Fannie Martin
Nola Martin
Luther Jacobs
Charlotte Jacobs
Arthur Jacobs

1924

Dill Blue Mollie Oxendine
Clifton Oxendine Ernest Bell
Flowers Locklear Maretha Bell
Margaret Locklear
Lessie M. Lowry
Richard Lowry
Shelton Sanderson
Clessie Jacobs
Lenny Jacobs

(Dates are not given for Cattie Roberts and George T. Roberts.)

Mrs. M. Johnson and Rudolph Bell have also been mentioned as early workers.

MEMBERS BEGIN BUILDING CHURCH

After local members had contributed their own labor for the new church building, bricks were laid. Here is a report of District Superintendent W. A. Parsons in the 1923 conference journal:

"At Pembroke a brick veneer church building with accommodations for Sunday School and social activities, is nearing completion at a cost of \$10,000. Two-thirds of this from the Centenary. D. F. Lowry, the pastor, has gathered about him an efficient corps of workers.-----Here is large opportunity."

CHURCH BUILDING COMPLETED

In the 1924 Conference Journal D. S. Parsons is quoted:

"Our new church at Pembroke has been completed and occupied. It is a credit to Methodism and sets a standard for buildings among the Indian people. The Board of Home Missions and Church Extension gave \$7,000. Pastor D. F. Lowry was heart and soul of the enterprise, and he was ably seconded by all the other pastors of the Pembroke group. There is a debt of \$3,500....Membership of the Church and Sunday School is growing rapidly."

FIRST CHURCH WEDDING

According to a wedding announcement belonging to the family, Ruthie Jane Sampson and William R. Locklear were married on September 11, 1924. This is believed to be the first wedding in Pembroke's newly-built First Methodist Episcopal Church. Their daughters are Ruth Locklear Dial and Sue Locklear Gerloff. Ruth Dial and her mother's sister, Lucy Sampson Locklear, are both active in the choir at First Methodist church.

MISS MARIAN DAVIDSON

In 1928 Miss Marian Davidson, a native of Pennsylvania, was sent to Robeson County to work in several of the Indian churches belonging to the Blue Ridge-Atlantic Conference. In 1928 Washington District Superintendent Donaldson reported that Marian had been busy her first summer as director of religious activities, working with youth and children in Bible schools, followed by such "regular work" as "developing worship programs for Sunday school, teaching the church hymns to a junior choir", organizing a "Junior League, as well as "some club work for week-day activities". Miss Davidson also helped to build up an active Epworth League for youth and young adults in the Pembroke area, held in the League Room of this church.

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

It was likely about this time that the women of Pembroke's First Methodist Episcopal Church became involved in the Ladies Aid Society, an organization supporting work in the local church and community. Perhaps they were also involved in the Woman's Home Missionary Society and the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. Ever since the first women's group was organized, the women have made significant contributions to this church, to the Pembroke community, and to the mission work of the Methodist Church.

MORE RECENT STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

VESTIBULE This window honors Delton H. Lowry, the husband of Shirley Smith Lowry. It was Delton's father, Henry Lowry, who started the local Holiness Methodist conference. From the time of John R. Lowry's death until his own death, Delton Lowry continued teaching the Bible Class in the sanctuary. Shirley is still an active participant at First UMC.

Tryon Lowry, their son, presently pastoring Collins Chapel UMC and

New Philadelphus UMC, (like the present pastor of this church, Jerry Lowry), began attending First Methodist when he was very young.

FELLOWSHIP HALL The window next to the doorway was presented in memory of James Albert Sampson by his family, Zettie Sanderson Sampson, and children. James Albert was a brother of Lucy Sampson Locklear and Ruthie Jane Sampson Locklear. A devoted worker in this church, James Albert's last project was supervising and helping with work on the upstairs Sunday School classrooms.

The second window was placed in this former "League Room" in memory of "Leon D. Oxendine and sons, Donald Ray and Gordon Dale" by Leon's widow, Alta Nye Oxendine, and their daughter, Wanda Oxendine Hunt. Leon began attending First Methodist as a young boy. He and his sons were all members of this church at the time they were killed in an auto accident in 1980.

STUDY The first window was presented in memory of John Robert Jones by Etta B. Locklear Jones and family. Etta B. has served as a longtime Sunday School teacher in the First Methodist preschool children's department. This is still the church home of Etta B. and her children.

The second window, in honor of Rev. Ray Sparrow, was presented by the Brady Lowry family. Eva Hatcher Lowry, an active member of this church, wanted to honor Ray Sparrow because it was during his pastorate that she united with this church.

MUSIC MINISTRY

Now, let's go back into the sanctuary. There is one more special window, behind the piano. It is dedicated to three people who have served in the music ministry of this church, LUCY LOCKLEAR, DAPHNE JONES, and IRA PATE LOWRY.

FULL CIRCLE

The story of First Methodist Church, Pembroke, begins with D. F. Lowry and a small group of faithful Christians desiring to spread the "Good News" of Jesus Christ throughout the Pembroke community.

In 1988 another Lowry came to pastor the flock at First United Methodist Church. He is Jerry Lowry, fourth son of Harvey and Myrtle Lowry. Like his father before him, Jerry heard and answered the call to Christian ministry.

For forty years, (with the exception of one year in the 1960's) between these two Lowrys, white pastors were appointed to lead the First Methodist flock. Now this church has come "full circle", back to its Native American beginnings.

May it continue, under the direction of its present pastor, and for all the years to come, to grow toward the likeness of Christ and to share with one and all the "GOOD NEWS" of the saving grace of God through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.