

One Hundred Years

1888 - 1988

Front Street United Methodist Church
Burlington, North Carolina

“Celebrating our past . . . Anticipating our future”

1888 - 1988

A Goodly Heritage

A Goodly Heritage

The psalmist expresses his thoughts well when in the sixteenth psalm, he says,

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
Thou holdest my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

All of us who claim a heritage in the life of Front Street Church can understand the mood of the psalmist. How wonderful it is to be able to know that our lives have been influenced by God through a great church that celebrates one hundred years of ministry — a ministry that has constantly grown through the years and has not only touched the lives of persons living in Burlington, but countless many lives around the world.

As a people of God, we are reflecting upon our history, but more than that, we are setting our sites on being a visionary church for the future.

Our past is great — but our future can be even greater. There are no limits as to what we can do for God if we become committed to His will for our lives.

In celebrating one hundred years of a goodly heritage, we do so for the sole purpose of thanking God for his protecting hand and asking for his guidance into the future.



Jack L. Hunter
Senior Minister

**Centennial History
of
Front Street United Methodist Church
1888 — 1988**

Certain places on earth become sacred to the right-minded person. The old home, with its memories and associations, links us to those of our own flesh and blood, childhood and youth, birth and death, happy playtime and toilsome hours — who can ever forget the old home with all of its hallowed memories or the dear parents who sacrificed for us to have the necessities of life and influenced us to live a Christian life?

The church is also a place of sacred memories. Our pastors, who are God's messengers and bring to us God's words, see that we are spiritually fed. Here, too, innocent child and aged grandfather can meet around a common Holy of Holies to hear the voice of God saying, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give thee rest." The generations of members of Front Street whose work is done, who have gone to their eternal rest, shall forever be kept in fond memory within our hearts, for here 100 years ago our forefathers built their first church to renew their faith.

It is a great and good thing for a church to have a history to record. Serving God and man for one hundred years is a noble achievement. Ours is indeed a goodly heritage. Part of the story is found in these pages; more is recorded in the memory of some who have helped to make the history; much is written only in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Our First Methodist District Circuit, The Guilford Circuit, was formed in 1783 and in that year reported 314 members to the Methodist Conference. Ten years later a separate circuit was established along the Haw River, which extended to Huntsville on the old Raleigh and Gaston Railroad. One of the first churches on the Haw River Circuit was constructed at Mount Pleasant about 1790. This church was built of hand-hewn logs, covered with boards which were held in place with poles and rocks instead of nails, with no floors except those which nature provided. The pews were split logs, each laid upon another log large enough to raise it sufficiently.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the issue of slavery divided the Methodists. A group of forty Methodists in Guilford County petitioned the Allegheny Conference in Ohio to send them a Minister. "We feel so conscientiously scrupulous on the subject of slavery," they said, "that we cannot hold fellowship with the Methodist Episcopal Church South." Front Street Methodist Church had its internal quarrels and its separating groups, but through it all our church remained with the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In 1888, when our first church was completed, we were in the Durham Circuit; a year later we were made a station, Burlington Circuit.

In order to understand and appreciate what our church has accomplished, we need to know something of our local history. It was in the year 1854, when the North Carolina Railroad was being constructed across North Carolina's mid-section, that there was a need for repair and maintenance shops. These facilities were wanted near the center of the line, which was in Alamance County. The City of Graham in February of 1854 passed a law prohibiting the railroad from building its track or any shops within one mile of the courthouse. At that point, the railroad people almost turned to Greensboro and perhaps would have chosen that area had it not been for General Benjamin Trolinger of Haw River. He made available 632 acres of land two miles from Graham. Part of this land can be traced back to the Earl of Granville in 1774.

The railroad company constructed seven brick buildings for its operations, eight small brick houses for shop workers, and three others for company executives. Railroad shops were completed in 1857, and plans for a large hotel were announced that year. Until 1867 the railroad hotel parlor served two Sundays a month as a meeting place for the few Methodist people.

In 1866 Company Shops was incorporated. The president of The North Carolina Railroad in his fifteenth annual report stated that the railroad would donate a plot of ground and build a large two-story frame building, the first floor for school classes and the second floor for church services. This building was completed in 1867. It stood in an oak grove where Fisher Street School used to be. This building was called Union Church, and the first Methodists worshipped here.

On November 19, 1887, George W. Anthony, as trustee for the Durham District Conference, bought lots 144 and 145 for the amount of twenty-five dollars per lot from the North Carolina Railroad Company. This same year with church membership at eighty-four, a building committee was appointed. Members were George W. Anthony, chairman, E. T. Hunt, B. O. Guthrie and G. W. Davenport. Church trustees at this time were George W. Anthony, B. O. Guthrie, James W. Teague, John C. Robertson, Levin W. Holt, and G. W. Adams. Our first church building was a small rectangular red brick building, 40' x 100', situated northeast of the present church. It faced Front Street, Company Shops, hence the name Front Street Methodist Episcopal Church South.

George W. Anthony was the man most responsible for the building completion, not only through financial contributions, but also through actual labor. The red common brick used was made of clay and wheat straw by Mr. Anthony at clay pits, where Pine Hill Cemetery on South Main Street is now located. Most of the lumber was cut and sawed on Mr. Anthony's land south of his home near Maple Avenue.

On May 28, 1888, the local Burlington newspaper reported that the corner stone of the Methodist Episcopal Church South was placed by Dr. W. S. Black, presiding elder. A large number of the town people attended. The Reverend L. L. Johnson, our circuit rider, reported in his letter to the local newspaper: "Using the ceremony prescribed in our Discipline, Dr. W. S. Black, presiding elder,

placed the Corner Stone of our new Methodist Church this morning. We very much appreciate the presence of our genial and highly esteemed friend and brother, Reverend M. Miller, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, at this place." Reverend Miller read the following hymn beginning:

Behold the sure foundation stone,
Which God in Zion lays.

"We were also much pleased to have the presence of quite a number of the town people of different denominations. Also the pastor, presiding elder and members of the Methodist Church, returned our many thanks to Mr. Dawson for the beautiful corner stone he gave us, on which is engraved the following:

Front Street M.E. Church South, 1888

The following articles were deposited in the corner stone: A Bible, our church hymnbook, our church discipline, a list of former pastors, presiding elders and official church members, *Nashville Advocate*, *Raleigh Advocate*, *Burlington News*, and an appeal from the presiding elder to the church. The copy of the *Christian Advocate* deposited contained an account of the death, burial, and funeral service of Dr. N. H. D. Wilson, and the obituary of Peter F. Holt, an aged and honored member of the church who died recently and was looking forward to the erection of this house of worship." The communication is signed: "Yours truly, L. L. Johnson, Pastor, May 28, 1888."

Dedication of our first church was on September 6, 1891. Presiding Elder Dr. W. S. Black, writing for the *Orphan's Friend* regarding the occasion, said, "Last Sabbath was a glad day for the Methodists and all lovers of Christ in Burlington. After a real struggle the Methodists of that place finished, furnished and paid for a handsome brick church, which is an honor to the congregation and the town. Last Sabbath was set for its dedication, and this writer was invited to preach the sermon and dedicate the church. The house was packed, a number having come twelve or fifteen miles to attend the service. Beautiful chairs for the pulpit were presented by Mrs. Anthony; an elegant communion service was provided by Mrs. Vaughn and Mrs. Ormond; a large picture of the North Carolina Conference was given by the Sunday School Class taught by Mrs. Anthony, and a handsome hymn book for the pulpit was a gift of the Reverend L. L. Johnson, who was our pastor when the enterprise was first projected."

Methodist events mentioned in a summary of 1891 activities in Burlington which appeared in the local newspaper on December 31, 1891 are:

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| April 26 | The Reverend R. A. Ricks, pastor of the Christian Church, died suddenly in the pulpit of Front Street Methodist Church at the beginning of services. |
| May 24 | Memorial services were held at the Methodist Church in honor of the Reverend Robert Anthony Ricks. |

- September 6 Dedication of the Methodist Church by Dr. W. S. Black took place.
- September 27 Evangelist J. William Lee opened a series of meetings at the Methodist Church.
- December 15 The Reverend D. L. Earnhardt, pastor of the Methodist Church, and his family left for their new home. The Reverend J. E. Underwood, new pastor, arrived and was cordially received.

In 1911 there were 600 church members, and Reverend J. A. Hornaday saw the need for a larger church building. He appointed a building committee, headed by George W. Anthony, that in turn had plans drawn by Wheeler, Galliher, and Stern of Charlotte, N. C., for a new and larger building. It was under the leadership of the Reverend T. A. Sykes in 1912, that construction was completed. This new building had a full basement for Sunday School Classes and a seating capacity of five hundred. The exterior was of yellow brick with windows of stained glass. The interior was painted off-white with stained walnut woodwork. Church pews were walnut; there was a brass railing for the choir loft and five large crystal chandeliers for main lights; a communion table and cabinet were of antique walnut. All rails and choir lofts were hung with velvet drapery. Our second church was considered one of the loveliest in the Burlington area.

The dedication service was conducted by the Reverend T. A. Sykes and Bishop John C. Kilgo. The Building Committee in 1911-1912 was comprised of George W. Anthony - Chairman, Walter E. Sharpe, Treasurer, Joseph A. Isley, Avery A. Apple, and Almon L. Davis.

By 1923 our church membership and Sunday School attendance continued to grow, and more room for the Sunday School became an urgent necessity. Under the leadership of our pastor, Dr. J. B. Hurley, we completed the excavation of the entire basement area and made other substantial improvements, including new chandeliers for the sanctuary and a new heating system. For several Sundays, services were held in the Burlington City Hall building. To pay for renovating our church we borrowed \$20,000 from a local bank. The extensive overhauling program was completed in March, 1925.

In July 1949, our pastor, the Reverend W. L. Clegg, announced that we would start construction in the next few days on a new three-story church school building. Plans were drawn by R. R. Markley, architect of Durham and Burlington. Cost of said building amounted to \$172,000.00.

The structure would be built of brick, matching the construction of our present church building. The ground floor would provide facilities for a social hall, kitchen, recreation hall, stage and dressing rooms. The main floor would have provisions for the church offices, nursery department and facilities for the week-day kindergarten. The third floor would provide departments for junior, intermediate, senior and young people's classes.

The foundation of our new church school building was only out of the ground a few feet when our main auditorium was destroyed by fire, thus making it necessary to redesign the exterior to conform to our new church that would have to be built.

Front Street Methodist Church was the scene of a fire that started around midnight, October 28, 1949, and burned like an inferno for an hour before local firemen, applying all their equipment, were able to bring it under control. Fire Chief Roma Fortune kept the department, including fifteen full-time firemen and several volunteers, on the scene until four a.m. Flames from the church building, at their peak, could be seen eight miles out of the city.

Chief Fortune said that the entire attic was at the point of caving in when the department arrived within a few minutes after the alarm, indicating the speed with which the blaze spread. The Reverend Clegg reported that when he first observed the blaze from the parsonage beside the church, "Flames were raging in the attic." This situation was just as the alarm was turned in. All but the brick wall, the bell tower and the church calendar board was considered almost a complete loss after the fire.

One person who was at the scene of the blaze recalled that at the height of the holocaust, our church bell began to toll. This eerie occurrence was attributed to falling debris striking the bell rope. While the fire was raging, a lady gave our pastor \$200.00 to start the building fund.

On December 10, 1950, our Building Committee decided to go ahead with building a new sanctuary; architects and contractors having been notified. J. A. Jones Construction Company was the contractor, to build on a fixed fee, for a cost of \$334,000.

For the next seventeen months our congregation met for worship in the Fisher Street School building two blocks away. The Education Building that was started before the fire was completed in March 1951, and our congregation held services there until the Chapel was completed in the Spring of 1952.

Our third church building was completed in June 1952. In addition to the main sanctuary with a seating capacity of 700, the church includes a chapel that can seat 130 persons.

The chancel window is a creation of the famed Franz Mayer and Company of Munich, Germany. The Reverend W. L. Clegg made arrangements for the window while in Germany in the summer of 1951. The first window built for our church was lost on the ill-fated *Flying Enterprise*, which sank off the coast of England January 10, 1951, only minutes after her captain, Kurk Carlsen, jumped into the sea. He was rescued by the tug *Turmoil*, which had been trying to tow the ship to safety. Captain Carlsen had refused until the last to abandon ship, remaining aboard for sixteen days after it was first battered by a hurricane.

The present window is the same design as the first, in a modernized medieval style of art.

The Annual North Carolina Methodist Conference was held in our new church plant October 22-26, 1952, led by Bishop Paul N. Garber. At this Conference a new district was created bearing the name "Burlington District." Dr. Allen P. Brantley was the first superintendent for the new district.

The Reverend Walter C. Ball came to our church in November, 1953. At that time we owed over \$100,000 on our new church building. This balance was paid in full May 7, 1955. This progress represented an important milestone in our church history and an accomplishment of which we should be justly proud.

In order to alleviate a parking problem, in the fall of 1962 the church purchased two separate adjoining properties lying directly across from our church on Fisher Street. These were used until the widening of Fisher Street closed our entrances in these lots. With future expansion in mind in 1968, our church acquired Dr. Troxler's property adjacent to Webb Avenue and south to the fire station.

In 1970 a study was begun under the leadership of our pastor, Reverend John M. Cline, to examine our expansion needs. From this study, plans were drawn that included 21,000 square feet of new space, including Aldersgate Hall, the Library and Reading Area, staff offices and the kitchen. The parlor was redesigned; there was extensive renovation in the Educational Building, including a modern pre-school education area and classrooms. After years of diligent planning by the Building Committee and our pastor, Dr. G. Robert McKenzie, groundbreaking ceremonies were held on July 4, 1976. Total cost of this expansion was \$1,200,000. A consecration service was held on Sunday, January 29, 1978, by Bishop Blackburn and Dr. Nicholas Grant, District Superintendent.

We acquired several properties for parking in 1976. One of these was the Walker property. This gave us not only more parking, but also drive outlets into Front Street and Davis Street. In 1979 the north side of our church lot was landscaped and paved for parking.

In June 1984, at the annual North Carolina Methodist Church Conference, Bishop William R. Cannon appointed Dr. Jack L. Hunter as our senior pastor. Under the able leadership of our senior pastor we are experiencing a further commitment on the part of the members to allow all areas of our church's ministry to move forward.

The future looks bright for Front Street United Methodist Church on its start into the second hundred years. May the work that made this history possible, and the work of the years it records, be an inspiration to us all to write with our deeds of devotion a record for the future even more glorious than that of the past.

Richard J. Moore
Church Historian

Ministers Serving Front Street Church

1886-1888	L. L. Johnson	1929-1931	L. D. Hayman
1888-1890	D. L. Earnhardt	1931-1935	W. A. Cade
1890-1892	J. E. Underwood	1935-1936	H. K. King
1893-1896	L. E. Thompson	1936-1939	H. I. Glass
1897-1901	J. H. Shore	1939-1942	F. S. Love
1901-1902	G. B. Perry	1942-1948	L. C. Larkin
1902-1905	D. N. Caviness	1948-1953	W. L. Clegg
1905-1909	E. M. Snipes	1953-1956	Walter C. Ball
1909-1911	J. A. Hornaday	1956-1961	Edgar B. Fisher
1911-1913	T. A. Sykes	1961-1966	Leon Russell
1913-1917	D. H. Tuttle	1966-1970	Mark W. Lawrence
1917-1919	S. E. Mercer	1970-1974	John M. Cline
1919-1923	W. B. North	1974-1984	G. Robert McKenzie
1923-1927	J. B. Hurley	1984-	Jack L. Hunter
1927-1929	George Perry		

Centennial Events

- Sunday, January 3** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — Wesley Covenant Service
Celebration of Holy Communion
Meditation by Dr. Jack L. Hunter
- Tuesday, January 12** 7:30 P.M. — The Vienna Choir Boys
- Sunday, January 17** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — Dr. Joe Hale,
General Secretary of the World Methodist Council
- Sunday, February 14** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — Dr. Randy Nugent,
General Secretary of Board of Global Ministries
- Sunday, March 13** 5:00 P.M. — Performance of Handel's Messiah, Part II,
by the Chancel Choir, Duke Chapel Choir, Orchestra and soloists.
Front Street Church Sanctuary
- Sunday, March 20** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — G. Ernest Thomas, Author, Lecturer,
Retired Director of Spiritual Life of the General Board of Discipleship
- Sunday, April 17** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — Dr. Haviland Houston,
Former General Secretary of the Board of Church and Society
- Monday, April 25** 7:00 P.M. — Aldersgate Hall. Children's drama and music program celebrating
our centennial year.
- Sunday, May 1** 8:45 and 11:00 A.M. — Mrs. Marion Conner, Monodramatist
5:00 P.M. — Monodrama of "They Knew John Wesley"
Family night supper
- Sunday, June 5** 11:00 A.M. — Bishop C. P. Minnick, Jr.,
Resident Bishop of the North Carolina Conference
12:15 P.M. — Picture taken of all church families present for celebration
12:30 P.M. — Lunch in Aldersgate Hall
Unveiling of Special Centennial Church Picture

Other events will include:

Historical tour of local area • Time capsule buried in church courtyard • Dedication service of newly installed Casavant pipe organ • "An Old Fashioned Service" with dinner on the grounds.

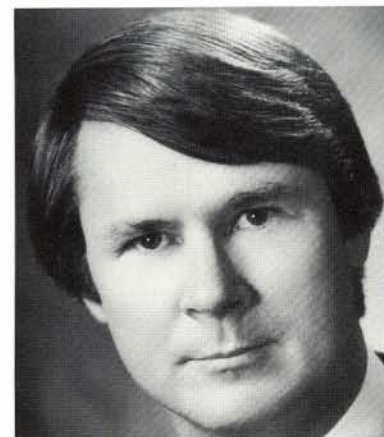
Featured Guest Speakers and Performers



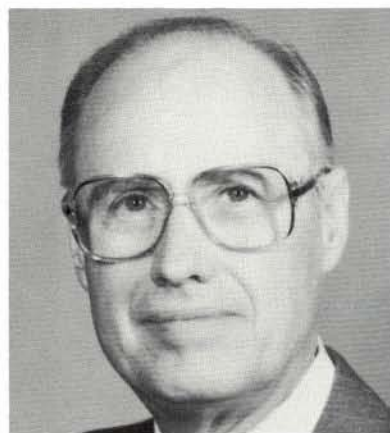
Randolph W. Nugent, Jr.
General Secretary
of the General Board of Global Ministries
The United Methodist Church



The Vienna Choir Boys



Joe Hale
General Secretary
of the World Methodist Council



Bishop Carlton P. Minnick, Jr.
Resident Bishop of the Raleigh Area
The United Methodist Church



G. Ernest Thomas
Former Director of Spiritual Life with
the General Board of Evangelism of The
United Methodist Church, Author, and
Lecturer



Haviland C. Houston
General Secretary of the Board of Church
and Society
The United Methodist Church



Marion Conner
Monodramatist, Jacksonville, Florida
Performs: *They Knew John Wesley.*



Chancel Window

The chancel window was designed and made by Franz Mayer & Company of Munich, Germany. An interesting fact about the window is that the first window ordered sank with the "Flying Enterprise" off the coast of France in 1952. The present window is a duplicate of the original order.

The window is rich in symbolism. The colors are all traditional church colors with blue predominating. The circular shape, forming the traditional Rose window, with neither beginning nor end, symbolizes the eternal existence of God.

The central figure is the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). This figure is the greatest of all symbols used in Christian art to represent the Son of God. Out of the Hebrew sacrificial system, Christian application is made of the lamb as the symbol of Jesus Christ.

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" John 1:29. The Agnus Dei is shown lying on the Book of the Seven Seals (see Rev. 5:11).

Behind the Agnus Dei is the Latin cross, crowned with a triangle, symbol of the Trinity. From this triangle a tri-radiant nimbus (light) further expresses sanctity.



Casavant Pipe Organ

As part of our Centennial celebration in 1988, our church will receive a new pipe organ for the chapel. This instrument was designed especially for our church by Casavant Frères Organ Builders of St. Hyacinthe, Canada. The Casavant Organ Co. was founded in 1879 and is one of the foremost designers and builders of organs in Canada and the United States. The instrument for our church is a tracker organ with two manuals, full pedal board and four stops.

The new pipe organ is a gift to Front Street Church by Mrs. Reid A. Maynard. It is given to the glory of God and in loving memory of her husband, Reid A. Maynard.

Centennial Committee

Leonard Butler - *Chairperson*
Ralph Kerns
J. L. Hamilton
Paul Abernethy
Myra Jackson
Richard Moore
Clara Clayton

Sandra Beal
Bill Bulla
Chris Hutchinson
Vickie Crissman
Ed Wooten
Linda Elliott
Jack Hunter

Ministers

Jack L. Hunter
David T. St. Clair
C. M. Fogleman, Jr.

Diaconal Minister of Education

Margaret Anne Biddle

Organist/Choirmaster

Mary Alice Bragg

Director of Children's and Youth Music

Linza Layman