

Fuquay-Varina
United Methodist Church



In the year 1903 Fuquay Springs was a rural village made up primarily of farmers who grew cotton. It was a community best known outside the immediate area for the claimed health enhancing properties of its spring water. It was in that year, on Oct. 13, that 17 citizens gathered to organize the Fuquay Springs Methodist Episcopal Church South, forerunner of today's Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church.

The community already had several churches. Wake Chapel Christian Church had been the first, organized in 1856. The Fuquay Springs Missionary Baptist Church (which became the present Fuquay-Varina Baptist Church) had been organized in 1902. A Free Will Baptist Church (which was eventually destroyed by a windstorm) also existed in the heart of the community – at the corner of what are now Fuquay Avenue and Academy Streets – although no organizational date or history of the church are now available.

But records show that the first meetings held by Methodists in the community were held in a school house (probably the three-room public school which stood where Sugg Funeral Home is now) and in the Free Will Baptist Church. Rev. J. O. Guthrie preached for them.

Church Organized

Mrs. Edith Parker, deceased daughter of the late Dr. J. M. Judd who was a charter member of the local Methodist Church, speculated some years back that most, if not all, of the original 17 charter members of the church were probably already Methodists who had grown up attending the Methodist Church in Buckhorn or Cokesbury, Holly Springs, Olive Branch (near Kipling) or Harnett Central.

As the Fuquay Springs community grew, a need was recognized by these Methodists to have a church of their own here. So the organizational meeting was held in 1903. Records show that 17 charter members were received by Rev. J. W. Guthrie and Rev. G. T. Adams, both district superintendents, presumably both representing the Buckhorn charge, Fayetteville District, of which the Fuquay Springs church was to become a part.

Early Years

The Rev. G. W. Starling was the pastor for the following year, 1904, receiving 19 additional members. It is presumed that Rev. Starling would have served several churches probably holding services on a rotating schedule of Sundays, some for morning and some for afternoon services. Records show that for the first year, the church's assessment for the pastor's salary was \$40. The church, in fact, paid \$75.

| Charter Members | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>J. D. Ballentine</i> | <i>A. M. Barham</i> | <i>Julia W. Barham</i> |
| <i>Lizzie J. Barham</i> | <i>T. C. Blackley</i> | <i>A. A. Bullock</i> |
| <i>B. A. Jones</i> | <i>B. Lee Jones</i> | <i>Ellen S. Jones</i> |
| <i>Hattie P. Jones</i> | <i>Mattie H. Jones</i> | <i>J. M. Judd</i> |
| <i>Claudia Sessoms</i> | <i>J. K. Sessoms</i> | <i>J. H. Smith</i> |
| <i>Maniza Smith</i> | <i>Daisy M. Williams</i> | |

In those early years, none of the local churches had fulltime pastors. Services were scheduled every first Sunday at the Baptist Church, every second Sunday at the Methodist Church, every third Sunday at Wake Chapel Christian Church and every fourth Sunday at the Presbyterian Church. Most of the community attended church every Sunday wherever preaching happened to be that week.

First Church Structure

The newly organized Methodists went to work straightaway in 1904 to construct a church. A site was acquired on South Main Street, just opposite Pine Street, and a wooden building constructed. This original structure still stands and has served as a pack house, an apartment dwelling and an antique shop.

According to church records, the structure was built and paid for in six months. The congregation reportedly began active work and held regular services. The church was assigned to the Buckhorn Circuit of the Fayetteville District and Rev. G. W. Starling was the pastor for the 1903-04 year.



Recollections of Early Years

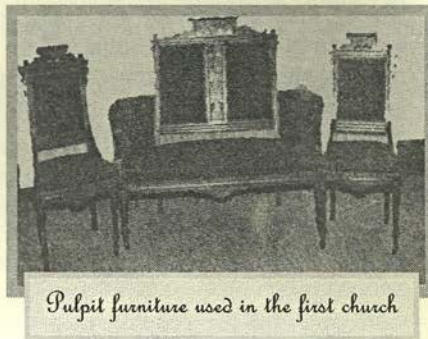
The church building was described as "a good one-room structure, very nice for that time." It had a vestibule for hanging coats and hats and a steeple containing a bell above the vestibule. The bell was rung for Sunday School and Church services and could be heard for several miles. When the church moved to North Main Street in 1930, the bell was also moved and placed in the church steeple.

A memory shared from Mrs. Parker was of attending the little church on South Main Street as a child. Most families would arrive in horse-drawn buggies and park them across the road from the church.

At one end of the church the pulpit was located in a semi-circular bay area with windows behind it. A wooden love seat and two chairs, both with upholstered seats and backs, furnished the pulpit area along with stacks of small chairs that were set out for youngsters' use during the Sunday School hour.

A curtain would be drawn to close off the pulpit area and so create a classroom for the "beginners" or "card" class. Later frames were put up so that curtains could also be drawn to separate other Sunday School classes. For many years Mrs. Claudia Sessoms would sit on the corner of the pulpit love seat teaching the young children's class, Mrs. Parker had remembered. Records show that the average Sunday School attendance for the first year was 28.

The church was heated by a wood stove. For many years the late J. K. Sessoms assumed the responsibility for seeing that plenty of wood was on hand and for getting up early every Sunday morning to build a fire so the church would be warm when the worshippers arrived. In the beginning years Mrs. Sessoms played a pump or pedal organ. Some years later, but probably prior to 1922, the church was able to buy a piano.



At quarterly conference time the church members would always bring picnic fare for dinner on the grounds. If it happened to be rainy or too cold to eat outside, two of the long pews would be turned with seats together to create a table.

The pews in that first Methodist Church have a bit of history all their own. According to the late Edith Parker's recollection, her father liked the comfort of the pews in the Edenton Street Methodist Church in Raleigh. So he went to that church and drew off a pattern for the pew seats, then had pews made for the local church by that pattern. The work was done at the Blanchard sawmill located where the Milkove Shopping Center is now. They were made from locally grown wood, probably pine. After the church moved down to its location at 402 North Main Street, the old pews, long ones in the center and shorter ones on either side, continued in use for a number of years. Some were used in Wesleyan Sunday School class. The loveseat and two chairs which had served as pulpit furniture were left for Rev. Maness. They had been donated by J. D. Riggan, a Raleigh merchant who had a summer home here. Rev. Maness gave them to Mrs. Parker.

New Charge; First Parsonage

As the Town of Fuquay Springs grew, so did the Methodist Church. Records show that in 1924 a new charge was created within the Raleigh District and Fuquay Springs; Olive Branch, Cokesbury, Buckhorn and Holly Springs Methodist Churches became a part of that charge. (It was reportedly created out of two circuits.)

It was in that same year that the Fuquay Springs church decided that its next major project would be the construction of a parsonage. The Rev. Mr. K. F. Duval wrote in the record book of the conference (among other accomplishments anticipated), "The building of a parsonage is our greatest need and we hope to accomplish it in the next few months."



Records show that a lot was purchased at the corner of Academy and Ennis Streets on Feb. 28, 1925, home of present member John Collins. By Dec. 12, 1925 the house was reported to be almost completed; the cost had been covered with the exception of \$600. Rev. Duval was the first pastor to occupy the parsonage.

At the time the parsonage was completed, the Fuquay Springs charge came into existence. Morale was high in the church then. On Dec. 12, 1925 Rev. Duval wrote in the minutes of the First Quarterly Conference, "We rejoice in the fact that we have become one of the great charges not only (of the) Raleigh District but in the whole North Carolina Conference."

During a quarterly conference in 1948 a resolution was adopted authorizing the Board of Trustees to sell the parsonage property when deemed wise and apply the proceeds to the erection of a new parsonage. In 1949 the congregation collected all the money needed for furniture to practically furnish the parsonage. Although the building committee was authorized in 1950, plans were delayed initially because of the unsettling incidents of war in Korea. It was, however, completed on a site further down Academy Street and ready for occupancy in July of 1951. With the final sale of the old parsonage, payment was completed in 1952.



Second Parsonage

Two of the congregation's pastors chose to spend their retirement years in our community – Rev. E. D. Dodd and Rev. E. C. Maness. The church had provided a home behind the first parsonage as a retirement home available to them where Rev. Dodd chose to live. This home was sold in 1957 for \$3500.

Building of New Church

Work began on a new church at 402 North Main Street in January, 1930. Money was scarce. The pastor, E. C. Maness, mixed mortar and carried bricks for the building. Mrs. Parker remembered that the men who brought the bricks insisted on payment before they would allow the bricks to be unloaded. She said sometimes the church didn't have the money to pay, and Dr. Judd would provide the cash so the bricks could be unloaded.

Within six months the sanctuary was completed and opened for services. The Sunday School annex was completed in the spring and summer of 1931. The radiators for heating the Sunday School building were installed the latter part of July 1931. Rev. Maness described the new structure as "a very substantial modern church. It has four department rooms and a nursery room and ten other rooms besides the church auditorium and the two lavatory and cloak rooms."

Cost of the building and furnishings was \$23,500, according to a history written by Maness for **The Courier Journal** in 1931. The Duke Endowment gave the church \$3500 of the amount. Maness' article continued: "The Fuquay Springs church has grown from a membership of 17 to 265 and from an appropriation of \$50 for pastor's salary in 1904...to an appropriation of \$750 for the present year, all of which is expected to be paid."

Maness reported that the "faithful and efficient building committee for the new church was composed of Dr. J. M. Judd, Dr. W. S. Cozart, Mr. J. C. Utley and Mr. E. C. Fish, all of whom worked together in cooperation with the pastor." He reported receiving seventy-three members during his pastorate.

Maness pointed out that the Fuquay Springs Methodist Church was organized on the 13th day of October, 1903; that the first deposit on the building fund for the new building was in the bank on the 13th of November, 1929; and that this new church building was first opened for services on the 13th of July 1930. These were rather interesting coincidences.

He contended that, aside from the unusual recurrence of the "13", this record is remarkable in that a congregation the size and capacity of this could complete and entirely pay for such a splendid building in less than two years. Maness also reported "the treasurer of the church, Mr. J. K. Sessoms, thinks that the church has never failed to pay in full the assessments each year and says he knows it has paid in full each of the eighteen years that he has been treasurer."

Records show that the new church was dedicated on Nov. 8, 1931 at which time a homecoming event was also held. Dr. H. M. North, presiding elder of the district, preached the sermon. Following the service a picnic dinner was served on the grounds with the observance of the fourth quarterly conference in the afternoon. To complete the day, that evening the singing class of the Methodist Orphanage gave a concert of sacred music. The church Sunday School had been raising \$10 per month for the Methodist Orphanage for a goodly number of years.



Post card of church found in antique shop

Loyalty to Church and Nation

The Methodists of Fuquay-Varina have a history of cooperation with other denominations of the area. For example, in June of 1938, Pastor E. B. Craven reported that the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches had planned a community Vacation Bible School, with an anticipated attendance of 300, and the sessions would be held in the Methodist Church. Later in that same year, the new pastor, E. C. Durham, reported the existence of a union prayer meeting, which was "largely attended".

In August 1935, Rev. J. C. Williams wrote, "A part of our members are loyal in every respect, support the church with their presence, prayers, and means. Others are interested to the extent that they are well-wishers but business and pleasures come first and Christ and their church second. But as a whole I would say it is up to average. Our attendance is good with the exception of our children. On account of the epidemic they have not been present."

Church minutes of July 1942 noted that a number of our young men had been called into the Armed Forces. In November of that year Robert E. Prince was asked to serve on a committee to write letters of sympathy and appreciation to the families of brothers J. C. Senter and A. M. Harrington who were deceased. The church sent the book "Strength for Service to God and Country" to all

their young men in 1944.

Things began to look up financially for the church. The church records noted, "During this quarter we believe more of our people have attended and taken part in the worship services and the communion than any other quarter this year. The spiritual conditions seem to be really improving. Money is plentiful and the people are liberal. An order for new pews and pulpit furniture was placed with Southern Desk Co. of Hickory for a cost of something more than \$2000."

The Fuquay Springs Methodist Church was a part of a "charge" or "circuit" until 1944, when the Fuquay Springs Church became a "station" church. (That is, they no longer had to share their pastor with another church.)

Need For Expanded Facilities

The United Methodist Men's group was chartered in 1954. Because of the fast growing numbers of the Sunday School, the church faced a need for expanded facilities. Approval was given in July 1956 for a new educational wing, including a large fellowship hall and kitchen, choir room, classrooms and a chapel.

Ground-breaking ceremony was held on Dec. 9, 1956. That December a 96' x 100' plot was purchased on the north side of the church. In 1926 the church had deeded a lot behind the church to the town for a street. The new building was about 4' over on this street property but the town was willing to deed it back to the church. Serving on the building committee under Chairman C. M. Matthews were S. L. Lane, J. R. Arnold, R. S. Ashworth, Utey Cotton, Dr. A. N. Johnson, Mrs. W. S. Cozart, Mrs. N. V. Prince, James Judd, William Johnson, John Henry Jones, Harold Parker, Mrs. John Smith and Davis Reams.



Worship in the 1950's

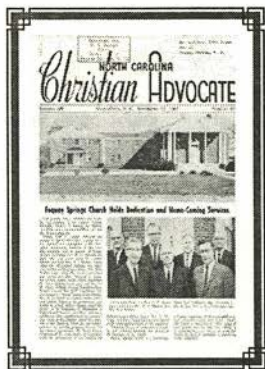
The late William Johnson, father of member Joanna Proctor and a long-time member of the Administrative Board, drew the plans and provided much of the material. The late W. A. Dones, a contractor and church member, constructed the wing with the assistance of his son-in-law, Clifton Keith among others. The estimated cost of the building was \$60,000.

The new educational facilities were opened on September 15, 1957, on Promotion Day. Sunday School rooms were assigned by Iris Brown, chair of Education and the late W. E. Medlin, Sunday School Superintendent. When the facility was completed, the cost had been approximately \$48,000. The loan from the Bank of Fuquay of \$23,000 was assumed at 6 percent interest. Air conditioning and heating were added in 1962 to the note along with repairs for the stained glass windows.



Church with new education wing

It was a red-letter day in the life and program of the Fuquay Springs Methodist Church in November of 1964 when they dedicated this new education building and celebrated Homecoming. A front-page spread appeared in the North Carolina Christian Advocate, the official Methodist newsletter, to cover the event. Bishop Garber delivered the sermon and was assisted in the service by former pastors Rev. E. C. Maness (pastor when the church was built), Rev. S. J. Starnes (pastor when the educational building was planned and the building fund began), Rev. John R. Poe (pastor when the construction was carried out), and Rev. Norwood L. Jones (pastor at the time under whose leadership the debt was retired). Bishop Garber drew some interesting conclusions about the early Methodist pioneers.



Stained Glass Windows

A decision had been made at the time of the earlier construction to plan for the chapel and forego the space for classrooms. When the addition was completed, the Sunday School rooms were occupied, but the chapel remained vacant for a time while the late Mrs. S. L. Lane and other members of the committee made contacts and worked to encourage donations of furnishings. The stained glass windows in the chapel, greatly added to the worship atmosphere. The memorial chapel was ready in 1960. A suggestion of a baptistry (since there were sometimes requests for immersion) was taken under consideration but never approved.

Most of the stained glass windows in the new church were purchased by individuals or families to honor family members or in memory of those deceased. Another deceased member, Mrs. S. L. Lane, (mother-in-law of present member Mrs. Marian Lane) once recounted that it was the Woman's Society that undertook the window project and many a fried chicken dinner was held at the church to help finance the effort. The windows cost \$80 each, Mrs. Lane remembered.



While most of the windows were paid for by gifts, the Woman's Society undertook the project and agreed to "stand for" the financing, according to memories of the late Mrs. Lane. They then had the task of soliciting the gifts. In the 1960's when the church sanctuary was remodeled, the architect working on the project suggested removing the stained glass windows. "He almost got tarred and feathered," Mrs. Lane said then.

| Memorial Inscriptions | |
|----------------------------|--|
| In memory of | William Marshall Ballentine and wife Elizabeth Ann Ballentine |
| In memory of | James Mahlon Judd, M.D. and wife Amorette Ballentine Judd |
| In memory of | John Thomas Judd and wife Louisa Frances Judd |
| In memory of | Andrew Jackson Utley and wife Mary Stephenson Utley |
| In memory of | Angus M. McDonald and wife Elizabeth Truelove McDonald |
| In memory of | Eff David Dodd 1884-1967 and Nora Finch Dodd 1886-1967 |
| In memory of | Barney Benton Fish and wife Molly Pate Fish |
| In memory of | Barney A. Jones and son Barney Lee Jones |
| In memory of | Romulus S. Barham and wife Adrianna Barham |
| In memory of | Rev. Pinkney Joice Wray and wife Margaret Burns Wray |
| In memory of | J. W. Dale, Sr. 1882-1954 and Emily Tilley Dale 1884-1964 |
| In honor of charter member | Julia Barham Davis and husband William Davis |
| In honor of charter member | Elizabeth Barham Ballentine by her husband William Joseph Ballentine |

Changes in Church Name

Through the years the name of the church has changed several times, sometimes as a result of changes beyond its control. It was in 1939 that the Methodist Episcopal Church (the northern branch), the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church merged to become simply the Methodist Church. That merger led to the dropping of the words Episcopal and South from the name of the original Fuquay Springs Church.

In 1963, Fuquay Springs and Varina merged to change the name of the town to Fuquay-Varina. In 1968 the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren to become the United Methodist Church, thus resulting in the name: Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church.

The Methodists at Fuquay-Varina have also been moved from one district to another twice. In 1972 the church was moved from the Raleigh District to the Sanford District, a move that caused great stir in the congregation. In 1975 a resolution requested return to the Raleigh district. A letter from then Bishop Blackburn to Pastor Allen Wentz, Jr. indicated his distress about his perception of a collaboration with the Holly Springs which was also moved. Rev. Wentz, Jr. explained our closer alliances to Raleigh than to Sanford. The request was resubmitted in 1977 and approved in January of 1978.

Church Expansion Begins

With the growth of membership, a decision was made to enlarge the sanctuary. Remodeling plans were approved by the building committee in May, 1969. The plans called for extending the existing building by 24 feet, adding a balcony, relocating the choir loft, elevating the sanctuary building steps on each side of the church and adding a roof. Estimated cost, including landscaping was \$75,000. Church renovations began the first of January, 1970.

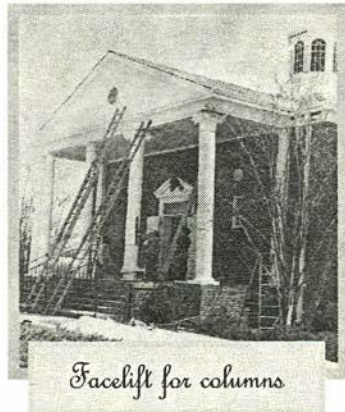


Renovated Sanctuary

In March, the trustees authorized the borrowing of up to \$35,000 to finance the remodeling. In August the building committee hired a professional landscape architect. In December the late William Johnson donated the retirement house at 108 Ennis Street. From the sale, \$10,000 was applied to the note for renovations. The remainder was used for mechanical equipment. While sanctuary renovations were in progress, church services were held in the basement for several months.

The church reached out to our Scout troops as they began sponsoring a Brownie Scout troop in addition to the Boy Scout Troop already under its sponsorship. The church began ministering to the residents of Kinton's Rest Home (now Brighton Manor) in 1974.

Other improvements to the church building came in 1976 with storm windows and a new floor installed in the basement. The Methodist Men redid the ceiling in the downstairs fellowship hall. A memorial sign for the front of the church was given in 1979 by the Adele Prince Class (in her memory) and the family of E. Mollette Blanchard. Because of deterioration of the front columns, a major facelift was undertaken.



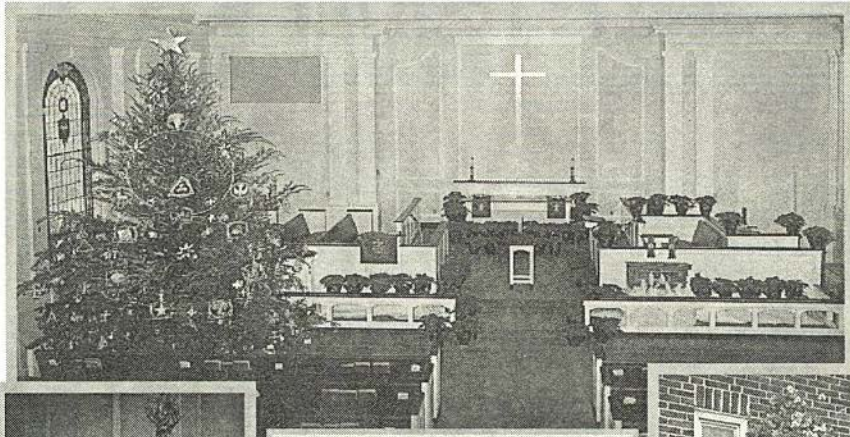
Church takes stand on alcohol consumption

Until the mid 1970's no alcohol was allowed to be sold within the city limits because of a state statute forbidding the sale of alcohol within 1 ½ miles of the Methodist Church. When a local store applied to begin sale of beer and wine, the Administrative Board voted in favor of continued opposition to the sale of alcoholic beverages. Despite their efforts, the law was eventually declared unconstitutional in 1976, however, and the local store won its license.

Expansion in Program Areas

The idea for a church library originated with the Committee on Education but was sponsored by the United Methodist Women. Mary Weede agreed to do the cataloguing. Money was provided for the shelving, lighting and wiring and rugs were donated. The new library, which opened officially in April of 1975 with 75 to 100 volumes, was first established in an upstairs classroom, then was moved to the Berean Wesley classroom, to the former pastor's study and then back upstairs. Many of the books have been donated as memorials and honorariums.

In 1973 the United Methodist Women took on the project of a Chrismon tree, making the symbolic ornaments used to decorate a Christmas tree in the sanctuary.



Chrismon Tree in sanctuary



Lenten cross

The Chrismon tree has become a traditional part of the church's observance at Christmas. In recent years each tree has served as the Lenten and then Resurrection Cross that is covered with flowers on Easter Sunday morning.



Resurrection Cross

Acquisition of Property and Parsonage Provisions

In 1966 some interest was shown in acquiring the McLean property behind the church; however, several years passed before a price could be agreed upon. Property across the street from the church was purchased by the late William Johnson in 1968 for \$15,000 and donated to the church to provide for additional parking.

In 1983 the Senior Parsonage was renovated to create two bedrooms and a bath upstairs at a cost of \$8,800. Later a housing allowance would be used by pastor Rev. Jerry Smith and for a time the parsonage was rented out.

In 1985, the church made an offer on the McLean property, offering \$43,000 for the house and ¾ acre. The asking price was \$49,000 and the property was sold to someone else. Once again, in 1986, the McLean property came up for sale, but again, the church was not willing to pay the asking price that was now \$59,000. In that same year, however the church did pave the parking lot across the street for \$17,000. In 1988 a land swap with David Stroud, who owned the car dealership next door, straightened the property line between it and the church. The church extended its loan assumption to finally purchase the McLean property (for \$53,600) to be used for an associate parsonage for Branson Sheets.



Parsonage for associate pastor

In 1983, Circle 4 of the United Methodist Women started a fund to build a ramp for the handicapped at the front entrance to the church.

Later the entire church helped with funding. In 1985 the United Methodist Men would raise funds for a church van. The music department was greatly expanded with the addition of a handbell choir in 1984. This was also the year that a pre-school was



Bicentennial Celebration

organized at the church for its members as well as families in the community, opening with 53 children and 10 teachers. 1984 marked the bicentennial celebration of Methodism and the Fuquay-Varina church presented a special musical dinner production, "Christmas with the Wesleys" in connection with the celebration.



Christmas with the Wesleys

Staff Expansions; Church sponsors ordinations

With the growth in members came the addition of a second worship service and a need for expanded staffing. A part-time Educational Director for Youth was hired in 1985. The church continued to grow and the first associate pastor, Rev. Branson Sheets, who had grown up in the church, was hired. Sheets was the second candidate for ordained ministry (1981). Mike Eason had been the church's first candidate in 1977. Judy Stephens became a certified candidate for ordained deacon this year (1999). Rev. D. T. Dale was the first missionary sent from our church. He and his family served for many years in Japan, coming back to the Raleigh area to retire.

The second associate pastor, Rev. Randy Cirksena, came from the Western Conference and served only one year. This position was handled by a program coordinator with the hiring of Rebecca Lile, a diaconal minister. Rev. Marti Hatch came in 1994 to again serve as an associate. Because of financial difficulties this position was eliminated in 1996. Because of financial difficulties, this position was eliminated in 1996, with part-time positions filling duties.

Decision to expand facilities once again

In the mid 1980's there was a concerted effort to plan for our future needs. A decision was made to move forward with plans to build a fellowship hall but that 5 percent of the cost should be in hand before work should begin. The Administrative Board voted to go forward with the addition of 6500 square feet fellowship hall complex and conversion of the old building into additional Sunday School rooms at a cost of \$465,000. A fund-raising campaign netted \$272,000 in gifts and pledges over a 3 year period. At the same time, consideration was given to enlarging the sanctuary after completion of the fellowship hall project. A year later, however, architects reported that it would be impractical to attempt to enlarge the sanctuary. A recommendation was made that the church continue to hold two Sunday morning services until such time as construction of a new sanctuary might be considered. A building committee, under the leadership of Bernard McLeod, included Gene Chosy, Stephanie Ashworth, Savonne Medlin, Larry Stephenson, Eddie Ragan and Jimmy Honeycutt.



Groundbreaking of fellowship hall

The new building was dedicated on Feb. 5, 1989 with Rev. Jerry Smith, pastor, leading assisted by Rev. Branson Sheets, District Supt. Dr. Kermit Braswell and Dr. Thomas A. Collins coming to preach. Members of the church family responded with several memorials. Rev. Sheets continued to serve under Rev. Jerry Juren's leadership for another year. He led an active group of young people in early morning Grow Groups. Rev. Cirksena then served as associate for one year. We began a church-wide tradition of providing Thanksgiving dinner to needy residents of the community.



The Fellowship Hall

Long Range Planning Force

A Long Range Planning Task Force (Sam Meyer, chairman; Tony Asbridge, Stephanie Ashworth, David Brownlee, Kay Currin, Dave Heiser, Sim Honeycutt, Jim Semple, Sue Stroud and Wray Stephens) was formed in 1991 under Rev. David Brownlee. Input was sought in 1993 from a group of church leaders who formed the Vision 2000 task force (Steve Allen, Tony Asbridge, Stephanie Ashworth, David Brownlee, Jim Casper, Mary Gray Fish, Margaret Gori, Rebecca Lile, Kitty Blackburn, Caryn McNeil, Steve Mangum, Bob Marley, Savonne Medlin, Sam Meyer, Jack Mays, Joanna Proctor, Jim Semple, Judy Stephens, Wray Stephens, Susanne Young) charged to look at status and future direction for the church in several different areas. Following the work of this group, the Administrative Board adopted the following mission statement:

Mission Statement

- † *We are people of God, sustained by our faith in Jesus Christ and called to do God's work through the power of the Holy Spirit.*
- † *We invite all to celebrate God's presence with us through worship; and to join with us in supporting one another in Christian fellowship.*
- † *In prayerful obedience to Christ's teachings, we proclaim the good news, teach the scriptures and serve others with the love of Christ.*

The Board voted to establish five task forces based on the five pillars contained in the mission statement – that of worship, fellowship, proclamation, teaching and service. Each task force was charged with projecting the implications of fulfilling the mission in terms of facilities, staffing and missions. Armed with the recommendations of these task forces, Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church continued to respond to God's call to be His Church in the greater Fuquay-Varina area.

Mid-week programming became a regular emphasis with the advent of Wednesday Night Live. Mission studies, book discussions, crafts, Bible Study, youth and children's programming were attended regularly after a most popular evening meal together. Evening Vespers with Holy Communion were initiated and continue to be well attended. The stewardship program, **In His Steps**, generated great participation.

New Staff Positions; New Ministry Programs

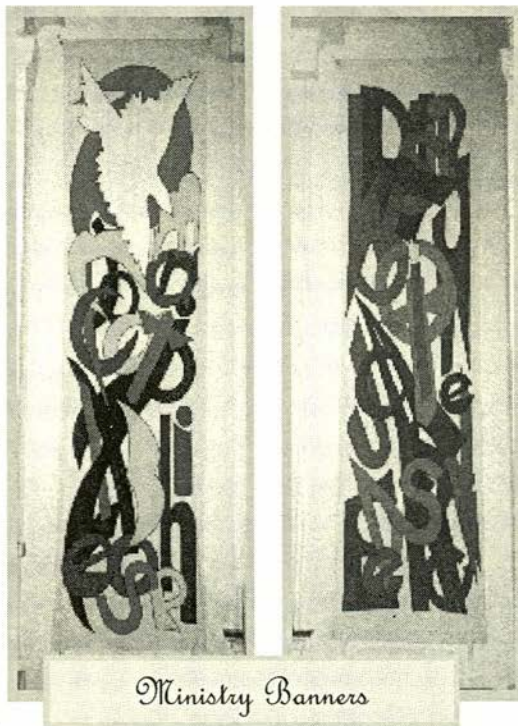
Pentecost in the Park, the annual tradition of all services worshipping together, began in 1992 in Falcon Park. New part-time staff were added: a Director of Children and Family Ministries and a Lay Ministry Coordinator; the Administrative Assistant position had also gone full-time with a half-time secretary and summer youth intern. We affiliated with Stephen Ministry and trained the first 14 of many one-on-one caregivers. Several would also be sent to national training to become Stephen Leaders in the coming years. 1992 also saw the beginning of a fourth worship service called New Light following an extensive telephone marathon to determine the need for a contemporary casual worship experience for the unchurched in the area.

The youth were involved in a year-long confirmation experience led by program coordinator, Rebecca Lile. A new welcoming ministry delivered mugs to first-time visitors. The children excitedly began the Pioneer Club. The youth began a CIA (Christians in Action) group during the summer and were the first originators of our current Homeless ministry still ministering today to the Homeless Shelter residents on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Today many of the members gather to carry food, fellowship and spiritual nourishment to the homeless in the Raleigh area. The senior adults organized into an active Prime Timers group. They hold monthly meetings, travelling to regional events and hearing exceptional speakers. In the fall they continue to be a part of the Fall Fling at Lake Junaluska.

In the summer of 1992, Wesley Sheets and Tom Darrell went on a work team to Alabama. Many foodstuffs were also collected for the Russian Food Relief and the children were involved in Missions Miscellaneous on Wednesday nights, visiting shut-ins. The children learned a new meaning for Halloween as they celebrated with a Christian flavor. Names were selected from an Angel Tree by members who provided Christmas for children of inmates. Overeater's Anonymous met for a time at the church and sign language classes were offered. Many signed up to be members in the Dinner for 8 fellowship.

An exciting new ministry was begun for the youth and older kids with the Puppet Ministry team, calling themselves **In God's Hands**. For many years they were very active in ministry, not only in our church, but traveled to other churches and performed for other groups in the area. Diane Smith was instrumental in creating many of the "characters" and in later years, also created the dramatic renditions of banners depicting the organizational pillars. Other banners were also used for Lent, Stephen Ministry and ChristCare.

The children's department continued to expand. Children's Church was offered in 1993 to all three morning worship services. A Public Education Appreciation Sunday was held; a parenting class, STEP, was offered. Parenting workshops were a popular course to take and the youth participated in a sexuality workshop. An Appreciation Brunch for teachers and families was held. Gifts Identification Workshops were offered. In 1993, we began picking potatoes for the needy in conjunction with the Society of St. Andrew. The children held a Baby Shower for Jesus.



Ministry Banners

Homecoming Celebration 1993

It was during this year that we observed our 90th anniversary with a Homecoming celebration. A special video was created featuring many of our older members as they talked of earlier years. Rev. Bill Young was hired to be the Pastor of Visitation and is beloved even today as he continues to minister to our members in rest homes. A marriage enrichment program was offered as well as a women's support group for depression. The church began the first of many Gifts Identification weekends, the forerunner of Discovery classes to help people to discover their spiritual gifts, passions and talents.

The average worship attendance was now over 450 and a new adult Sunday School class was formed. Short courses were held in Christian discipleship and the Welcome Center was opened in the foyer of the fellowship hall. The Building Fund was renamed the Debt Retirement Fund in anticipation of putting behind debts and looking toward future needs. Growth had necessitated the hiring of a full time custodian.

The Facilities Committee (Sim Honeycutt, chair; Mike Allen, Stephanie Ashworth, Joe Ashworth, David Brownlee, D. R. Bryan, Annette Harper, Jill Houck, Bill Mountford, Bernard McLeod, Bob Sheets, Wray Stephens and Larry Stephenson) met April 5-Oct. 4. In their report they recommended sanctuary seating for 600, additional classroom and activity space of 15,000 sq. ft., 100 new parking spaces, restoration of present facilities and acquisition of adjacent property when available. A Building Steering Committee (Stephanie Ashworth, chair; Kathy Barnes, Terry Bass, David Brownlee, D. R. Bryan, Charlie Gardner, David Knox, Savonne Medlin, Bill Mountford, Virgil Ours, Wray Stephens) was formed and charged to begin planning a program of growth-ministry strategy and facility development to fulfill our mission to our growing community.

Pastor David Brownlee received affirmation from the Church Council for 10-12 sessions of orientation in a new membership program to be called Connectings. Rev. Bill Young offered to remain on staff as Visitation Pastor at no pay to secure a needed full-time ordained Associate Pastor. The church once again took leadership in local outreach ministries in reviving the Fuquay-Varina chapter of Habitat for Humanity, hosting a Mexican Las Posadas festival for St. Bernadette Catholic Church and starting Better Beginnings, a reading/mentoring program. It was now time to move into a greater emphasis in the music offerings. A full-time Minister of Music was hired, necessitating the partitioning of the choir room into office space and the old fellowship hall being turned into a choir room.

The church structure changed to an Administrative Council format that later added an Advisory Board. Several church leaders were involved in a class on Basic Christianity; Disciple Bible Study was offered by Associate Pastor, Rev. Marti Hatch. Friendship Families reached out to help newcomers become aware of our activities and the preschool classes were moved to the first floor because of new regulations. A new van was also purchased. A Couples Class eventually evolved into another new Sunday School class and church members began wearing name tags.

Building Decisions Face Local Congregation

With phenomenal growth facing them in all directions, the congregation at Fuquay-Varina United Methodist was now faced with many decisions. Several Charge Conferences (where members of the Church Council were the voting members) as well as Church Conferences (where all members of the congregation were invited to participate in the voting decisions) were about to be the format for many of the decisions.

Conferences April 4th, June 14th, July 9th (1995)

The building process was put on “pause” at the April 4 Charge Conference to determine the extent of the congregational will to undertake a project that would either re-locate the church or expand it on the current site. A Facilities Committee had studied the feasibility of selling the parsonage and building a new one. A ¾ acre lot on E. Academy Street was donated in memory of Dr. Glenn B. Judd and Dora Elliott Judd by their daughters for the purpose of a new parsonage. A Church Conference was held June 14 of that same year to receive, discuss and vote on the recommendation to proceed with the building of the parsonage.

On July 9, a Charge Conference reported the appraisal of the parsonage at \$129,300. A motion was presented to construct a new parsonage costing \$198,500 with no profit taken by the builder (no landscaping, hookups and permits or straightening out of road). All church members attending were allowed to vote and the motion carried to start construction as soon as financing was approved.



Following a report from the Building Steering Committee, 8 subcommittees were formed and a construction management firm, Polycon, Inc. and architectural firm, D. O. Tise Architects were hired to look into next steps for FV-UMC. A broader need for expanded facilities than those included in the initial charge had been identified. New goals were set: to share our vision for the future, to build public awareness of the need for expanded facilities through the pulpit, church newsletter and congregational meetings and to build enthusiasm for the plan.

Two congregational meetings were held in July (12, 23) to review the progress of the Building Steering Committee and to ask questions and offer suggestions. A list of options was developed: 1. Do nothing 2. Bring present facilities to state of excellent repair 3. Repair, remodel and expand on present property 4. Acquire adjacent property as it becomes available 5. Acquire property in another location and build new facilities 6. Seed new congregation.

The congregation agreed to enter a time of discernment called Visioning including a process led by Dr. Steve Compton, Conference Director of Congregational Development to explore the range and scope of commitment. Members were interviewed during the later weeks of Oct. and early November and the committee developed an informational package identifying options, pros and cons, financial commitment required for each option and provided demographics of the church population, facilities and programs. A package was sent to every household represented by members and the constituents and Dr. Compton presented a preliminary report on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1995. The findings showed that the congregation was equally divided on the issue of relocation, but 95% positive about the church generally.

Meanwhile, programming continued to expand at FV-UMC. In 1995 an AIDS Care Team was formed, which continues today as a vitally important ministry serving now as a Christ Care group. Another ministry, Divorce Care, began for members as well as for those in the community. A Women's Retreat was held as well as a Couples Retreat which were both enthusiastically received. Adults began a supportive Barnabus Buddy system to affirm our children and the MAD-REC (Music, Art, Drama, Recreation) program got off to a rousing start. This ministry provided a weekly afternoon of music and activities and produced elaborate productions which attracted many new families. A Youth Choir was formed as well as orchestral musicians who served in Instruments of Praise that for a time added greatly to the worship services. The Drama Ministry was also begun.

In 1996, several members participated in a **Faith to Focus** program offered through **CLAY** (Clergy and Laity together in Ministry) and an exploration was begun with Network, an effort to help people discover their Spiritual Gifts, passion and style to be used in areas of ministry. Two Spiritual Gift weekends were held. Disciple Bible Class expanded greatly and the possibility of 11:00 Sunday School was discussed.

The loan was paid off on the fellowship hall, but repairs to the heating system were an unforeseen expense. The associate pastor's position was eliminated but needs for staffing were obvious. A part-time Program Director and part-time Youth Minister came on board and the Stewardship Committee undertook year-round education efforts, offering a Sunday School class, and later would bring on board Crown Ministries. In the spring the Women held their second annual Retreat at Oriental; the Prime Timers went to see Worthy is The Lamb and again went to Lake Junaluska and a local senior citizens ministry was begun called First Tuesdays.

The Children's Ministry began a group for 4th and 5th graders called Kids for Christ. The third graders went off for a Bible Retreat to learn how to use their Bibles, which continues now as a tradition. A cooperative effort began between the church and Camp Agape and provided the first annual Day Camp that summer. Fall Festival, held for the second time, proved to be a huge success and Vacation Bible School offered two sessions, also including St. Bernadette Catholic Church in its planning.

Overwhelming growth was evident everywhere. The three morning worship services were at times overflowing and hallways and entrances continued to be crowded. The two small nurseries were no longer adequate to accommodate the almost weekly new arrivals of babies. The educational facilities were full with no rooms for needed additional classes.

Emotions were running high with all the building decisions and a Faith/Unity group formed. At the May 13 Administrative Council meeting a handout proposed 3 directions for consideration: Stay (on the existing campus); Go (to a new campus) or Stay and Go (a twin campus concept using the existing as well as new campuses). The Congregation was now faced with major decisions of what to do next.

Church Conference – May 19, 1996

Rev. Jim Lee, District Superintendent of the Goldsboro District was invited, in the absence of our own District Superintendent, Dr. Kermit Braswell, to preside over this important Church Conference. A video presentation presented the three options and Wray Stephens, Administrative Council Chairman, presented the motion: "That a Twin campus direction be established. Make a long term commitment to our existing campus, bringing these facilities to an excellent state of repair, and acquire an additional in-town site of 15-20 acres for the development of a satellite campus".

The ballots were taken and the vote revealed 178 **Yes**, 160 **No**. Although the Discipline, the book of law for the United Methodist Church, requires only a simple majority on any vote, the Administrative Council had voted that an 80% majority requirement would be necessary in order to assure success. A second vote was taken to see if the support was there but the vote remained the same. Following the administration of Holy Communion and the singing of "Blest Be The Tie", the meeting was adjourned.

The theme for the congregation undertaken in 1996 was Deep and Wide. 40 Days to Spiritual Fitness was observed during Lent. In April, FV-UMC enrolled in the ChristCare Series and sent Pastor Brownlee and Judy Stephens to be trained as Equippers. 16 leaders were trained in the first class which would start the exciting ministry of ChristCare small groups in the coming new year. In May another exciting way to do church was introduced with the Network Discovery. David Brownlee, Judy Stephens, Margaret Gori, Mary Alice Ramsey and Wray Stephens attended a training session to implement this way of helping people identify their spiritual gifts, personal passions and personal style as they fit into the Body of Christ. The church leadership participated in the process during the summer months as they enthusiastically endorsed the implementation throughout the congregation.

Main Street Kitchen, a ministry to provide a free meal to anyone in need, was founded and began serving meals on the third Saturday evenings. Hurricane Fran dealt a mighty blow to the community in October and our church responded with generosity, providing home-cooked meals for many evenings to countless people without electricity. The Pumpkin Patch, now a tradition, offered to provide funds for mission trips to Hinton Rural Life Center in western North Carolina. FV-UMC undertook the first steps to become a Shalom Zone community. And the members kept coming.

Multiple children's classes were forced to meet in partitioned off fellowship hall and the week-day children's programs operated at capacity. The Pre-school enrollment was over 125 with waiting lists; Mother's Morning Out was discontinued due to lack of space and the MAD-Rec program was forced to close its registration at 168 students. Vacation Bible School was no longer advertised because even the two sessions were overflowing. The parking facilities offered new challenges and the office space was transformed continually to place staff and equipment.

Historic Steps Undertaken

In November, 1996 the FV-UMC undertook a vote to relocate and a Building Committee was authorized to develop plans for congregational review. The Resolution declared its intent to relocate its facilities and ministries to a site in the southwest corner of the intersection of East Academy Street and Judd Road. 15 acres were to be purchased for \$225,000 on or before April 1, 1997 with an option to purchase an additional 2 acres at \$15,000 per acre and a Building Committee was charged with bringing as soon as practicable to a Church Conference for approval, specific building plans, financing plans and a transition plan. The motion for no debate passed by more than a 2/3 majority. Jim Casper was named chairman and stated the committee's intent to be empowered by the Trinity from concept to completion. To secure needed funds, a Miracle Sunday was held in December which raised over \$112,000. The momentum was rising.

Church growth continued to escalate. More and more cribs were needed in the nursery as well as workers. The Lay Ministry Coordinator's title was changed to Director of Lay and Carrying Ministries and increased to an 80% position; a part-time receptionist as well as a new position, Mission Coordinator, changed the staff configuration. The two part-time positions of Program Director and Children's Coordinator were combined at the end of the year as Rev. Elaine Lillison, ordained deacon, came to meet needs.

In Feb. of 1997 Atkinson/Dyer/Watson was selected as the architectural firm and Polycon as the General Contractor/Construction Management firm to manage the building project. Program workshops were held in April and May to capture the hopes and dreams of congregational members and by July a Master Plan was completed. With schematics completed in August, the congregation met on September 14, 1997 for a Church Conference to accept the challenge of the century. The Building Committee presented an interpretation of how to carry out programmatic vision. The architectural plans were received, and approved by the Raleigh District Committee on Locations. Four subcommittees (Communication, Content, Capital, and Construction) were appointed.

R SI Consultants were selected to facilitate a capital campaign (Moved by the Spirit) which began in August. The Capital Vision Fund was designated for paying off the parsonage loan and paying for capital improvements/repairs on current church facilities. The church received \$25,000 from the insurance company for a new roof and painting of the sanctuary following the effects of Hurricane Fran. The Finance Committee allocated additional resources to make other needed repairs and Miracle Sunday Fund was designated for monies towards the new facility. The Moved by the Spirit campaign began the expansion of opportunities for ministry and mission in the 21st century. A Special Event was held in conjunction with the Moved by The Spirit campaign and all 3 worship services met together on November 9 at Wake Tech for worship and to see an inspiring video. Funds pledged for the three year campaign through Celebration Sunday, which followed on November 23, exceeded \$1 1/2 million.



Worship event at Wake Tech

St was decided that Phase I of the building program would provide a worship/fellowship center seating for 620. The large chancel/stage area would allow growth in the music and arts area and the kitchen facilities would complement the focus on missions. Flexible educational space would meet day-care and preschool codes and nursery facilities would adequately accommodate the growing numbers of children. It was decided that a smaller prayer chapel would use the stained glass windows from the current chapel. Expanded offices and adult Sunday School classes would enable adult educational experiences. Additional classrooms were added, though, from the original presentation. The next phases would include a dedicated sanctuary for 1000 plus with a separate family/life center for ministry as well as expanded educational space. An enclosed courtyard would tie the facilities together and remind us of God's all encompassing love. The plans were in place and work began with excitement.

At the beginning of 1998, 100 people were asked to voluntarily move to the 8:30 worship service in an effort to more evenly distribute attendance at worship services. The 8:30 service became contemporary in format; 9:50 more of a blended service with 11:15 reserved for traditional worship. The ChristCare small groups began in a big way in January and a

Parish Nursing program began. The church held a Spiritual Renewal focus event with noted speaker Dr. Dennis Kinlaw coming in mid-March. FV-UMC developed its first web site and a Joel Team was commissioned to clarify the mission, vision and values of the congregation. Several staff and members attended a conference on Transitioning the Church into the Future. Bridge Builders, a community-wide effort to look at how to help vulnerable children and families, was begun.

After a delay, because of an increase in higher bids, the actual Groundbreaking took place on June 21, 1998 with an excited throng of people gathering on the site for construction of the new facility.



Groundbreaking for new church facility

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new worship service

(Gateway) directed primarily at Generation X"ers was begun under the leadership of Rev. Darren Talley. The welcome center was transformed into a mission/information center. VBS ministered to over 225 kids with 77 adults and 22 youth volunteering in a huge success. New ministries included Crown Ministries and Weigh Down, a weight reduction support group, as well as the emergence of a new musical praise team, which would later take the name "Living Proof".

1999 has been an exciting year with the progress of the massive undertaking to relocate the church facility from North Main to the corner of Judd and Academy. The outline and building framework were evident at the beginning of the year and excitement only grew with each step. Of particular notice for the community was the placing of the cross high above the

structure and the raised brick crosses in the brickwork. Quite a few comments were made about the temporary red glow of the lighted bell tower and input was sought for a dedication stone near the entrance. Pastor Brownlee proposed changing the name of the church with the move, but after a strong reaction, invited all members to renew their pledge to become the fullest and best expression of a faithful congregation as we enter the next millennium.

Programmatically, the Teddy Bear Mission was undertaken to bring teddy bears to worship which were later given to local law enforcement agencies for children needing a "loved bear" to help them through difficulties. Members gave to camp sponsorships in a cooperative effort with Pine Acres Community Center. The youth moved into a new structure: The Rock, Special Missions and Jesters. Crown Ministries offered two sessions, Connectings continued to attract many visitors, a large class of confirmands joined the church, and new ChristCare group leaders were trained. A mission work team went to Hinton Rural Life Center and a special second mile giving offering was sent via the Conference to children in Africa. The Preschool and Before/Afterschool programs held fund-raisers for playground equipment. The Stewardship Committee held its mid-year campaign, Moving Forward in the Spirit.

New ministries were developed: "Matt 25:40", organized for extended visitation and help among the laity; a creative arts academy for grades 4-8; explorations into small groups and programs for children with Gateway Community; opening of new Prayer Closet for prayer at church during the week; and Quiet Care, the sending of cards and words of encouragement. Church Pages, a booklet of available services by members, was developed by a ChristCare group. Exciting news about grant approval for Bridge Builders was announced in conjunction with a center for youth that would need to be within walking distance from the Middle School. A task force was formed to look at possible uses of the current building should a sale not be imminent. Potential ministries identified were uses by the Boys and Girls Club and an adult day care health facility. Negotiations were undertaken with the Stay and Grow group (Friends of FV-UMC), however, to purchase the building. The preliminary selling price was \$1,050,000, including an option agreement for \$50,000. The Church Council voted unanimously on June 8 to accept the resolution and present the offer (after negotiations) to a Church Conference scheduled for June 30, 1999.

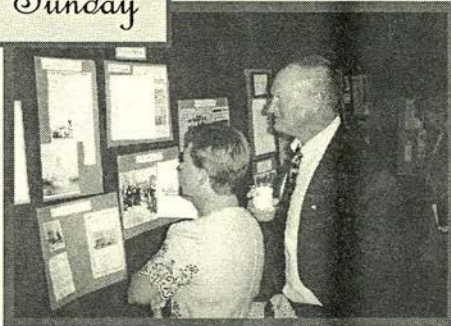
Heritage Task Force worked tirelessly along with a Transition Team to help in moving plans. A handout on handling change was developed for the leadership; display cases built for historical memorabilia, videos recorded and booklets written to preserve memories and update history. Church replicas of the three locations as well as posters of stained glass windows were made available. A historical wall hanging will follow in coming months.

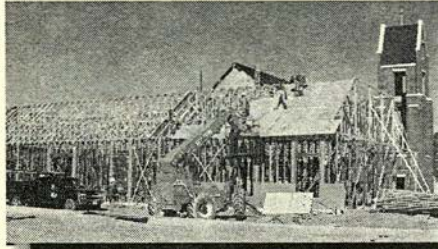
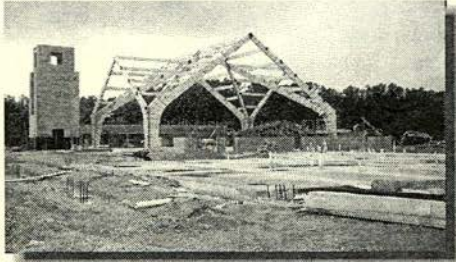
Heritage Sunday was celebrated on June 20 with former pastor Rev. Jerry Smith, preaching, a portrait of faith from the church and dinner on the grounds followed by a hymn sing. A processional walk from the old facility to the new location took place on July 11, 1999 followed by the first worship service in the new location. A service of consecration took place on July 25 with District Superintendent Dr. Kermit Braswell officiating.

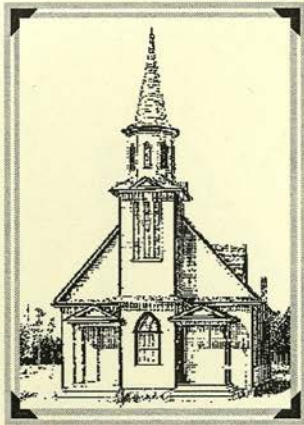
The heritage of the church continues to be created and passed on, as God is worshipped at Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church.

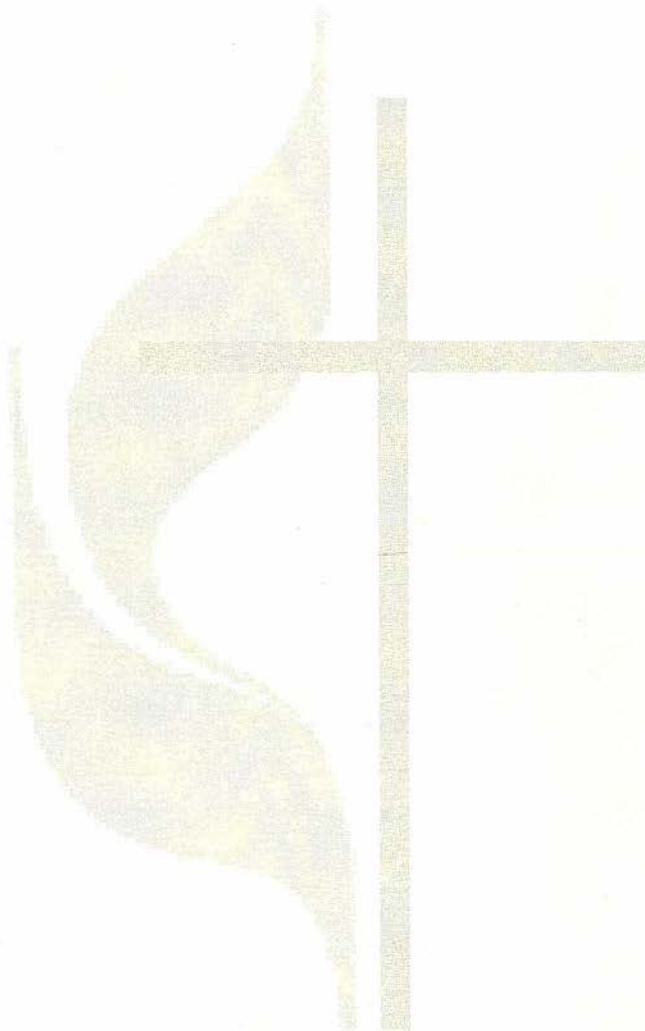


Heritage Sunday









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