

Organized July 3, 1955

HISTORY

of the

GRACE METHODIST CHURCH

Elizabeth City
Pasquotank County

The site for a Methodist Church to be located in Providence Township was selected by a committee appointed by Elizabeth City District Superintendent, C. Freeman Heath, with Rev. Key Taylor, Pastor of the South Mills Charge, as chairman. This plot of land was selected in the Spring of 1955, after a careful survey and study of several alternate locations. It was purchased from Southern Loan and Insurance Company of Elizabeth City, North Carolina and is located on U. S. Highway 17, approximately four miles North of the city. A clear deed of approximately 1.3 acres of the land was given to us by the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the North Carolina Methodist Conference so that we could borrow money from the National Board of Missions and Church Extension. The actual price of the 4.6 acre site was \$6,750.00; however, when 1.3 acres of this land was deeded to the Church at a value of \$2,000.00, the price of the remaining 3.3 acres was \$4,750.00.

The name for the church was selected by the Quarterly Conference as Grace Methodist Church.

Grace Methodist Church of Elizabeth City, North Carolina had its beginning from June 12 to June 19, 1955, at which time a Tent Revival was held, with Rev. Tom Collins of Raleigh, Executive Secretary of the North Carolina Methodist Conference Church Extension, as Evangelist.

Rev. J. R. Couchman, with his wife, Alice, came here from Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, to assume his duties as Pastor of the Grace - Trinity Charge. Trinity was to be located on West Main Street, Extended. Both were new churches just being established. A building which once housed a dairy was purchased and renovated for use as Trinity Methodist Church. The area above was made into an apartment, and housed the Pastor of the Grace - Trinity Charge. Since Trinity furnished the housing, Grace bought what furniture fourteen members could afford at the time. The Pastor and his wife lived there for two years.

Grace Methodist Church of Elizabeth City, North Carolina was constituted by Rev. Tom Collins on June 19, 1955, with seventeen members transferring their membership to the new church. Rev. J. R. Couchman held his first worship service in the Tent on Sunday morning, June 26, 1955.

Erection of the Metal Building, soon to be our temporary church building, was begun the week after the Tent Revival. The building was rented from the North Carolina Methodist Conference for \$25.00 per month. The first service held in the Metal Building was July 3, 1955, with the organization of the church by Rev. C. Freeman Heath, District Superintendent, and the first election of church officers.

Charter Sunday Night Service was conducted October 30, 1955 by Rev. Heath. This meeting served as the first Quarterly Conference. Any member who had joined Grace Church between the dates of July 16, 1955 and October 30, 1955 was considered an official charter member.

The charter members of Grace Methodist Church are as follows:

Mrs. J. E. Green,
Laura and Guy Green
Mr. & Mrs. C. S. Saunders
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Brothers, Jr.
Aaron, Joel & Carl Brothers
Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Turner
Mr. C. J. Cuthrell, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Wood
Mrs. Carroll Spencer
Sandra Spencer
Mrs. Raleigh Griffin
Mr. & Mrs. Richard C. Helmkamp
Dick Helmkamp
John, Douglas & Jennifer Jo Helmkamp
Mr. & Mrs. Sam McPherson, Jr.
Sam, III & John Allan McPherson

Charter members (cont'd):

Mrs. J. R. Couchman

Mrs Mae Saunders

Mr. & Mrs C. J. Cuthrell, Sr.

Mr. & Mrs. William Godfrey

Mr. & Mrs. William J. Grant

Mrs. Lee Brothers

Kay Brothers

Mr. Lee Brothers (affiliate)

Mr. & Mrs. W. O. Winslow. Jr.

and

Patsy Winslow

The Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized November 14, 1955 by Mrs. J. H. Brown, District Secretary of Promotion, and Mrs. W. E. Brown, District Secretary of Missionary Education and Service, both from Hobbsville, N. C.

A special business meeting was called by Rev. Tom Collins on January 4, 1956. Plans for the new church building were made after considerable discussion.

In February, 1956 blueprints of a Fellowship Hall and four Sunday School rooms were drawn up by Mr. Frank Wood, and reviewed by Mr. Al Smith, architect of Elizabeth City. This building would be known as the Educational Unit of the church.

The meeting of an appointed building committee met March 13, 1956 to decide on the location of the new building on the church property.

Blueprints were let to contractors in February with bids from all contractors to be in by March 28, 1956. A building contract was awarded to Chanell Brothers, General Contractors, of Elizabeth City.

Groundbreaking services were held June 23, 1956.

Building Fund money was deposited in the First & Citizens National Bank.

As an act of the North Carolina Conference in June, 1956, Grace and Trinity Churches would no longer form a two-point circuit. Trinity, later amended to Brite Meadows, was designated to go station, and Grace would join Newland in the two-point circuit. Newland, Sharon, McBride and Trinity (South Mills) had heretofore comprised the South Mills Charge. Newland was designated to leave the South Mills Charge, and the newly formed two-point circuit was now known as the Newland Grace Charge.

Newland built a new parsonage to house the pastor of the Newland-Grace charge. After two years at Brite Meadows, the pastor and his wife moved into the Newland Parsonage. For this benevolence Grace Church is deeply indebted to Newland Church.

In July, 1956 the Building Program was launched and contractors began their work. The foundation was poured and plans were underway for the construction of the brick exterior and cinder block interior building, to cost an estimated \$28,000.00.

On December 17, 1956 Grace Church applied to the North Carolina Board of Missions for \$10,000.00. In January, 1957, \$15,000.00 was received from the \$10.00 Club under authorization of the Board of Missions and Church Extension, with Rev. Tom Collins as Executive Secretary.

In January and February, 1957 volunteer members of the church did the sanding, painting, varnishing, scrubbing, waxing and polishing in the new building. One member installed floor tile over the entire building. All was in preparation for the opening service in the new building.

The altar, pulpit and communion table were of solid mahogany and were made in Elizabeth City. Seating was by Southern Desk Company.

Furniture, new Broadman Hymnals, Church School literature and various items were moved into the new building in anticipation of the opening Sunday.

The first Church School and Worship Service held in the new building of Grace Methodist Church was February 24, 1957.

Judge W. I. Halstead of South Mills, and Mr. W. C. Morse, Jr., attorney of Elizabeth City, were instrumental in preparing necessary legal papers.

Grace Methodist Church has been graciously blessed with spiritual gifts as well as with material gifts. Words cannot express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude to each and every individual, friend, member, church or organization who has made a donation or contribution in any form to the church during its existence. With your help our burdens were made much lighter, and it is at this Dedication Service that we would like to say to you a great big THANK YOU.

"Open House" was observed in the new building March 24, 1957 from 2:00 until 5:00 p.m. At 7:30 a.m. the official opening of the church was conducted by Rev. J. R. Couchman. Immediately following this Rev. Heath called the Quarterly Conference to order, and business of the Newland-Grace Charge was taken care of.

The church conducted its first Vacation Bible School from June 10 through 16, 1957, with 54 children and teachers enrolled.

The Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized in July, 1957.

As an act of the North Carolina Annual Conference Rev. J. R. Couchman and family joined the Virginia Conference June 22, 1958.

Rev. W. F. Medlin joined the North Carolina Methodist Conference in June, 1958 and was sent with his wife, Mary, and young daughter, Kathy, as pastor to the Newland-Grace Charge.

Application was made and a gift of \$4,500.00 was received from the Duke Endowment in December, 1958, which was applied on the church debt.

Semi-annual payments for the remaining \$4,500.00 debt on the adjoining land continues to be paid to the North Carolina Conference Board of Missions, as of October 6, 1963.

The M. Y. F. and Woman's Society of Christian Service of the church have been instrumental in raising funds to purchase needed supplies and articles that create a more worshipful atmosphere in and around the church. Short-leaf pines were donated and planted on the grounds by one of our faithful members.

By an act of the North Carolina Methodist Conference in July, 1959, Rev. Nathan H. Byrd, with his wife, Jacky, and young daughter, Debbie, was sent to the Newland-Grace Charge.

The Elizabeth City District Pastors' and wives' luncheon meeting was held at Grace at the beginning of that new church year, in order to give the new Pastors in the District a chance to look over one of the new Ten-Dollar-Club churches.

In July, 1960 our church building debt had been reduced to \$1,600.00.

The church has sent a delegate to the Annual Conference Session of the Methodist Youth Fellowship at Duke University for a week each summer (1960, 1961, 1962 and 1963).

The church has also presented Bibles to its graduating Seniors in the years 1961, 1962 and 1963.

Final payment on the church building debt was made October 1, 1962.

The first and only wedding held in the church, as of October 6, 1963, was the marriage of Shelia Temple, daughter of Mrs. Ed. Scott, to Brent Gray, on January 2, 1963, officiated by Rev. N. H. Byrd.

The church has been blessed in not having had a death during its eight years of existence.

Rev. A. L. Reynolds, with his wife and two daughters, Joyce and Carol, was sent to the Newland-Grace Charge by the North Carolina Methodist Conference in June, 1963. With Rev. Reynolds as chairman of a steering committee, plans were formulated for the Dedication of Grace Methodist Church, and the date set for the service was October 6, 1963.

On many occasions the members of this church went forward on faith when it was not possible to determine what the future might hold. Each person who was willing to do his or her part, did it not for personal glory, but for the advancement of this church as a lighthouse for God in this community.

The history of this church is presented this date, October 6, 1963, as a part of the Service when the church is being dedicated.