

Hickory Grove
United Methodist Church
Liberty, North Carolina



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**A History
of
Hickory Grove
United Methodist Church**

**Researched and Written
by
Dennis and Susan H. Cafferty**

Liberty, North Carolina: 1990

Setting The Stage

Methodism came early to northwestern Chatham County with the first Methodist Episcopal Church here organized through the influence of Bishop Francis Asbury and other early Methodist circuit riders. Asbury, who first visited the area on July 22, 1780, reported in his journal that after struggling through thickets and brush, climbing rocks and hills, and fording numerous creeks, he came to an unnamed place where "the people were looking almost as wild as the deers in the woods." Asbury scholars identify this "unnamed place" as northwestern Chatham County. Asbury's later visits led to the establishment of a church in this place in 1789, which he first refers to as "William McMaster's Chapel." This church later became known as Rocky River Methodist Episcopal Church.

For the next forty years, there was steady growth of the Methodist work in Chatham County. Then, in the late 1820's, a reform movement began within the Methodist Episcopal Church which would lead to dramatic growth in this area. The 1820's were a time in the life of the new nation when democracy and the rights of the common man were being strongly emphasized on the political scene. And this spirit among the people affected their thinking about the church. The Methodist Episcopal Church, at that time, was totally dominated by the clergy. The early bishops, Asbury primary among them, gave strong episcopal leadership. Conferences were attended by ministers and local preachers only, with the latter having no vote. And this the reformers wanted to change! They wanted the vote for local preachers. They wanted to send lay delegates who would also have a vote at Conferences. They wanted bishops elected for a term of office, rather than for life, to limit their power. After several years of agitating for change, some of the reformers were expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church; others left it willingly. Together they formed the Methodist Protestant Church. The Methodist Protestants were particularly strong in North Carolina, and the first Methodist Protestant Conference was established here

in 1828. Only a few entire congregations left the Methodist Episcopal Conference and became Methodist Protestant Churches. The other Methodist Protestant Churches in North Carolina, of which there were more than 100 by the time of the Civil War, were all established as a result of the great evangelistic zeal demonstrated by the early Methodist Protestant preachers. Their efforts focused primarily in rural areas. A pastor would be sent into an area to establish "preaching appointments" wherever people could be gathered-- at country cross-roads, in school houses, even in the open country. Where they met a good response, a new church would be established.

The Early Years of Hickory Grove Church

And, thus, began the work at Hickory Grove. It is listed as a preaching appointment in the minutes of the Conference in 1836. We do not know the names of the early Methodist Protestant preachers who worked in this area, but the results of their work still stand. In the 1830's and 1840's, they established preaching appointments at Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, Zion, Hope, and Flint Ridge, all of which went on to become organized churches. Hickory Grove was an organized church by April 1, 1840, as evidenced by the deed issued on that date (Chatham County, Book AE, page 565):

"John McMasters of Randolph Co., N.C. and Rufus McMasters of Owen Co., Indiana and Isaiah Picket and wife Phebe Picket, and Susannah Craven of Chatham Co. deed to William W. Vestal, Isaiah Fox, Jun., Samuel Nelson, Alfred Vestal and John Hinshaw of Chatham Co., Trustees of the Methodist Protestant Church at Hickory Grove, April 1, 1840, for \$1.00 a tract of two acres situated on the waters of the Rocky River adjoining the lands of Price Vestal, running 16 x 20 x 16 x 20 poles,* for the proper use of the Methodist Protestant Church and a Schoolhouse at Hickory Grove. Wit: Wm. T. Hadley, John McPherson, H.H. Throop, J. Westfall. Reg. November Session 1840."

*A pole equals 16.5 feet.

This property is located about one-third mile south of the present Hickory Grove sanctuary building and lay along one of the main roads through the area at that time. A log structure was built on this site. The deed indicates that it was to be used as a school house in addition to use as a church, though no other documentation of its use as a school has been found. That some of the land was given by the McMasters family, one of the leading families at Rocky River Methodist Episcopal Church, offers support for local church information that some members of Rocky River Church were involved in the establishment of Hickory Grove. In all likelihood, some of the first members of Hickory Grove were the reform-minded Methodists from the Rocky River Church.

Local church information is unclear as to how many buildings stood on this property over the next forty years. The dedication bulletin for the "Educational Building" in 1973 in a brief historical sketch says that the first building burned during the Civil War and another was built. Other oral information indicates that the original building stood until the 1880's when it burned. In either case, all that now remains on this site is four graves marked with field stones and a pile of rubble, containing stones (perhaps from the foundation) and fragments of hand-made bricks.

Minutes of the Methodist Protestant Conferences were not available to the writers for most of the early years of Hickory Grove's history. The only Journal available was from the year 1860. At that time, Hickory Grove was one of twelve churches on the Randolph Circuit, served by the Reverend Joseph Causey. Individual church statistics were not recorded, but none of the churches was large, with membership of all twelve consisting of 674 white members and 6 colored members.

By the 1880's, when Journals are more available, Hickory Grove continued to be on the Randolph Circuit, which consisted of from seven to nine churches during that decade. The churches were still small with total

membership on the circuit remaining around 500 members throughout the decade. In 1884, records indicate that the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church held its annual session at Hickory Grove Church from November 26 to December 2. The Reverend D.A. Highfill was pastor at the time. Preachers and lay delegates from across the state stayed in the homes of church members. After the business session each day, a preaching service was held, open to the entire community.

A New Era

In 1888 the deed for the current church property was issued (Chatham County, Book E-O, page 67):

"Alford M. Pickett deed to J.P.M. Pickett, Jimie Hinshaw, A.S. Way, John Wreen, and J.W. Pearce, Trustees of the Religious Society of Methodist Protestants at Hickory Grove, Dec. 19, 1888, for the good will and respect he has for said Society, a tract of three acres and 57 1/2 rods* on the waters of Rocky River, adjoining the lands of A.M. Pickett and A.C. Pickett and running 25 poles* by 21 1/2 poles by 25 poles by 21 1/2 poles, in trust for the use and benefit of the said religious society of Methodist Protestants. Reg. April 29, 1925."

We have no documentation of the reason for this move. Perhaps it was at this time that the old church burned, creating a need to build a new church. Perhaps a growing congregation needed a larger building. And for reasons also unknown--maybe a changing landscape with new roads and travel patterns--the new building was built approximately one-third mile north of the original site, just a few yards east of the present sanctuary building. This frame building which was built in the late nineteenth century would serve the congregation until 1952.

Another change lay ahead for Hickory Grove Church when it was aligned with a new charge in 1893, the

*A rod equals 16.5 feet squared; a pole equals 16.5 feet in length.

Chatham Circuit. Because of its location near the county line, Hickory Grove would move back and forth between the Chatham and Randolph Circuits several times in the forty years that followed. The new Chatham Circuit, created in 1893, had five churches--Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, Zion, Springfield, and Hope. The total membership on the circuit was 280 members, with 200 "scholars" and 20 teachers in the Sunday Schools. The pastor's salary for that year was \$200.00.

The 1890's and early years of the 1900's were not good years for Chatham County Methodist Protestants. By 1900, membership on the Chatham Circuit had declined to 240. Siler City Methodist Protestant Church was added to the circuit in 1900, but by 1908, even with the additional church on the circuit, membership was at 213. The Sunday School, however, was experiencing growth, with 267 "scholars" reported that year. In 1908 the Conference Journal reported some individual church financial statistics. The following figures were reported for Hickory Grove:

Pastor's Salary--\$40.00
 Foreign Missions--\$3.00
 Church Extension--\$5.00
 Home Missions--\$4.00
 Ministerial Education--\$1.00
 Superannuates (Pension Fund)--\$3.00
 All Other--\$56.00
 Total Church Expenditures for Year--\$112.00

In 1917, Hickory Grove was moved back onto the Randolph Circuit, which consisted of four churches with 613 members at that time. But, this move was only temporary. In 1923, Hickory Grove was put back on the Chatham Circuit which now included five churches--Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, Hope, Zion, and Flint Ridge. The total membership on the circuit was 205.

By the early years of the twentieth century, many of the major families currently involved at Hickory Grove were active in the life of the church. Wil and Nannie Glass and their children were participating in the church as were some members of the Pike family.

Thomas and Mary Daffron had moved into the community with their growing family in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The Daffrons played a strong leadership role at Hickory Grove during these years. Many of the present members of Hickory Grove grew up in Sunday School classes taught by several of the Daffron sisters, with the highlight of the year being the annual Children's Day program.

Several pastors with Chatham County roots served Hickory Grove during the first half of this century. A. O. Lindley, father of two current members--Sara Lou Lindley Garner and Oscar Lindley, served Hickory Grove from 1928 to 1931 and again from 1935 to 1937. Rev. Lindley had special ties to Hickory Grove, having married Annie Daffron in 1912 after the death of his first wife. W. M. Pike, whose homeplace still stands on the Hinshaw Shop Road near the county line, served from 1923 to 1924. He retired in the Hickory Grove community and is buried in the church cemetery.

Changing Times

A significant event for Hickory Grove's future occurred in the public domain in 1925--a new Liberty-Silk Hope Road was constructed, running along the frontage of the church's property so that Hickory Grove was now located on the main road through that section of the county. This favorable location may help explain why Hickory Grove grew while Rocky River Methodist, now far from the main road, declined and eventually was closed.

Another public event that impacted Hickory Grove was the Great Depression. Hickory Grove was still on the Chatham Circuit when the Depression began, with the Reverend A. O. Lindley as pastor. In 1930, the churches were able to pay only \$500.00 of his \$800.00 salary. In 1931, it dropped to \$380.00. As a result, the Circuit was dissolved the next year, with Hickory Grove, Flint Ridge, and Zion going to the Liberty Circuit and Hope and Piney Grove to the Siler City Circuit.

In 1935, a smaller Chatham Circuit was re-formed with three churches--Hickory Grove, Zion, and Flint Ridge. The three churches had a total membership of only 99 members and the pastor's salary was only \$153.00 (perhaps a part-time appointment). The Rev. A. O. Lindley returned to pastor the newly formed circuit.

Denominational Reunion

1939 was a significant year for Methodists across the nation. It was in that year that the three major branches of American Methodism--the Methodist Protestant, the Methodist Episcopal, and the Methodist Episcopal--South (which had split off from the Northern church in 1844 over the issue of slavery) were united to form The Methodist Church. The Methodist Episcopal, having more churches than the Methodist Protestants, were divided into two Conferences in North Carolina, with the boundary lying along the Chatham-Randolph County line, thus ending Hickory Grove's periodic changes in alignment first with Randolph County and then with Chatham County Churches. This merger officially changed the name of the church from Hickory Grove Methodist Protestant Church to Hickory Grove Methodist Church.

After the merger, Hickory Grove became a member of the Siler City Circuit. There were seven churches on the circuit in 1940--Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, Hope, Mt. Vernon, Rocky River, West End, and Zion. The circuit was in the Fayetteville District. The Journals now report statistics for individual churches. In 1940, we find that Hickory Grove Church had 50 members with 51 in the Church School. Hickory Grove's portion of the pastor's salary was \$75.00, and the total church budget was \$116.00.

New Growth

1950 was a year of great growth for Hickory Grove. At the beginning of that year, the church had 69 members. During that one year 24 members were received on profes-

sion of faith and one by transfer, bringing the total church membership to 94 by the end of the year. Church School membership was 75. The total church budget had grown to \$3,601.00. These were exciting years in the life of Hickory Grove Church. There was a strong Methodist Youth Fellowship under the direction of Clifford and Clearl Kimrey, with many young people being led to Christ through their involvement in the group. The Reverend J. H. Parrish gave strong pastoral leadership to the church. And in 1951, in response to the growth being experienced, Hickory Grove began work on a new building. The timber was donated by Walter Daffron and much of the labor was provided by church members. As a result, the new building was built for a total cost of about \$15,000. It included the sanctuary, an entrance hall, and four Sunday School classrooms. The first service was held in the new building on Easter 1952. The old building, which stood beside the new one for a few months, was sold and torn down for lumber. All indebtedness on the new building was paid in full by 1955, and it was dedicated at that time during the pastorate of the Reverend Harvey Johnson.

By 1960, Hickory Grove had grown to 109 members, with 99 in the Church School. It was still on the Siler City Circuit, which now consisted of four churches (Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, West End, and Zion) and was now a part of the Burlington District (formed in 1954). During the pastorate of the Reverend Olin B. Isenhour (1958-1962), a new parsonage, located at West End, was built.

In 1966, an additional parcel of land was added to the church property to provide space for the expansion of the Church Cemetery as needed in the future (Chatham County, Book 318, page 232):

"Etta Daffron, Swannie Daffron, and Clatie Daffron deed to D. F. Stephens, Glenn Glass, and Fletcher Poe, Trustees of Hickory Grove Methodist Church, Oct. 4, 1966, for \$10.00, a tract of one acre beginning at stake in the northeast corner of

the property of Hickory Grove Methodist Church and running 257 x 170 x 257 x 170 ft. Reg. Oct. 19, 1966."

Hickory Grove United Methodist Church

In 1967 the Siler City Circuit was divided and a two-point Piney Grove-Hickory Grove Charge was created. The current parsonage, near Piney Grove Church on the Ed Clapp Road, was built at this time. In 1968, Zion was added back to the Charge. 1968 was also a landmark year for Methodism in America. The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren to form the United Methodist Church, thus changing Hickory Grove's name to its present form: Hickory Grove United Methodist Church.

In 1970 Hickory Grove had 90 members with an average worship attendance of 51 and 70 Church School members with an average attendance of 49. The total church budget at that time was \$4,461.00. Under the leadership of the Reverend J. D. Mitchell, the congregation began a new building program in 1970--the construction of the hut. The members did most of the work themselves, and the materials were paid for as they were bought. The work was completed in February, 1973, and the hut was dedicated on March 25, 1973, with the District Superintendent, the Reverend James H. McCallum, presiding.

A final piece of property, again given by the Daffron family, was acquired in 1976 (Chatham County, Book 396, page 422):

"Clatie Daffron and Etta Daffron deed to Ike Ferguson, Jack Smith, Ralph McLendon, W. G. Glass, Fletcher Poe, and D. F. Stephens, Trustees of Hickory Grove United Methodist Church, June 25, 1976, for \$10.00, a tract of 1.35 acres across the road from the property of Hickory Grove United Methodist Church. Reg. July 9, 1976."

This property, now known as Daffron Memorial Park,

was given during the pastorate of the Reverend Gordon Hanford. The timber on it was cut and sold, with the proceeds going to a piano fund. A new piano was badly needed in the sanctuary because squirrels had gotten into the old piano and damaged it. Church members, young and old, helped clear the park area of rocks so that it could be used for softball and other recreational purposes.

In 1980, Hickory Grove was still on the three-church Piney Grove-Hickory Grove Charge (Hickory Grove, Piney Grove, and Zion), which was now in the Sanford District (formed 1973). Church membership was 77 with an average attendance of 60. The Church School had 112 members with an average attendance of 63. The total church budget was \$5,870.

During the period from 1981 to 1985, during the pastorate of the Reverend Jan Fogleman, the sanctuary was renovated. New carpet, pew cushions, and stained-glass windows were added. In 1986, during the pastorate of the Reverend Richard Tysinger, Zion Church, which now had only 3 or 4 active members, was removed from the Charge, creating the present two-point Piney Grove-Hickory Grove Charge.

The decade ended on a positive note with renewal and growth in many areas of the congregation's life during the pastorate of the Reverend Susan H. Cafferty. Renewal has been experienced in the Sunday School, with increased participation and enthusiasm. Numerous fund-raising projects have been held to fund building improvements and maintenance projects. A Vacation Bible School was held in the summer of 1989 for the first time in many years. And after a number of years of inactivity, an organized unit of United Methodist Women was chartered in mid-1989 and a United Methodist Men's unit in early 1990. The congregation has become actively involved in the work of the Liberty Association of Churches, and members have begun reaching out on the personal level, drawing new members into the Church. By January 1990, church membership had increased to 94 with an average worship attendance of 40. The

Church School had 69 members with an average attendance of 35. The total church budget was \$19,410.

Forward Into The Future

At the beginning of the 1990's, Hickory Grove faces many challenges and opportunities. There are challenges and opportunities for growth--growth in commitment, in stewardship, and in leadership development and growth in the number of actively participating members. There are challenges and opportunities for service--finding new ways to reach out as a caring congregation to the community and to the world beyond, touching lives with the love of Jesus in word and in deed. Hickory Grove stands ready to rise to these challenges and opportunities--building on the firm foundation of over 150 years as Methodist people in this place, ready to move forward into the future, trusting in the Lord's continued presence and guidance.

May Christ's Glory be revealed by His Church in this place. Amen!

Pastors Who Have Served Hickory Grove Church

1836-1860--unknown at time of writing
 1860-1861--Joseph Causey (d.1878)
 1861-1880--unknown at time of writing
 1880-1885--D. A. Highfill (b.1847 d. 1927)
 1885-1887--unknown at time of writing
 1887-1888--C. A. Cecil (d.1921)
 1888-1892--unknown at time of writing
 1892-1893--T. F. McCulloch
 1893-1897--W. W. Amick (b.1832 d.1907 Buried in cemetery
 at Liberty Grove Church)
 1897-1898--E. G. Lowdermilk (b.1858 d.1935)
 1898-1902--W. C. Kennett (d.1925)
 1902-1903--unsupplied
 1903-1904--D. A. Highfill (b.1847 d. 1927)
 1904-1905--unsupplied
 1905-1906--J. L. Giles (d.1911)
 1906-1908--W. D. Reed
 1908--C. W. Bates (student pastor; served part of
 the year)
 1908-1909--W. C. Kennett (d.1925)
 1909-1910--J. R. Hutton
 1910-1913--J. H. Bowman (b.1860 d.1926)
 1913-1914--W. A. Ledford
 1914-1915--J. H. Bowman (b. 1860 d. 1926)
 1915-1916--T. E. Davis
 1916-1917--E. G. Lowdermilk (b.1858 d. 1935)
 1917-1918--P. S. Kennett
 1918-1923--W. F. Ashburn
 1923-1924--W. M. Pike (b.1861 d.1944 Buried in cemetery
 at Hickory Grove)
 1924-1926--J. H. Bowman (b. 1860 d. 1926)
 1926-1928--C. G. Isley
 1928-1931--A. O. Lindley (b.1870 d.1948 Buried in
 cemetery at Center Church)
 1931-1935--F. R. Love (b.1900 d.1983)
 1935-1937--A. O. Lindley (b.1870 d.1948)
 1937-1938--Leo Pittard (supply)
 1938-1939--Charles Sharpe
 1939-1940--unknown at time of writing
 1940-1941--B. F. Meacham

1941-1943--Ralph Reed
 1943-1944--to be supplied
 1944-1945--R. C. Burgin
 1945-1947--C. A. Johnson (b.1918 d.1960)
 1947-1949--K. F. Duval (b.1884 d.1964)
 1949-1953--J. H. Parrish (b.1906 d.1980)
 1953-1958--Harvey B. Johnson
 1958-1962--Olin B. Isenhour
 1962-1965--J. C. Davis
 1965-1967--Roger E. Thompson
 1967-1968--J. T. Ledford
 1968-1973--J. D. Mitchell
 1973-1979--Gordon T. Hanford (b.1934 d.1985 Buried in
 cemetery at Hickory Grove)
 1979-1980--Jonathan C. Hill (b.1911 d.1983)
 1980-1985--L. Jan Fogleman
 1985-1988--Richard M. Tysinger
 1988-present--Susan H. Cafferty

Note: Dates of birth and death provided for pastors
 who are deceased when these dates were available.
 Those buried in Chatham County are so indicated.

Sources Consulted

Journals of the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. Pre-1939.

Journals of the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church. 1939-1967.

Journals of the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church. 1968-1989.

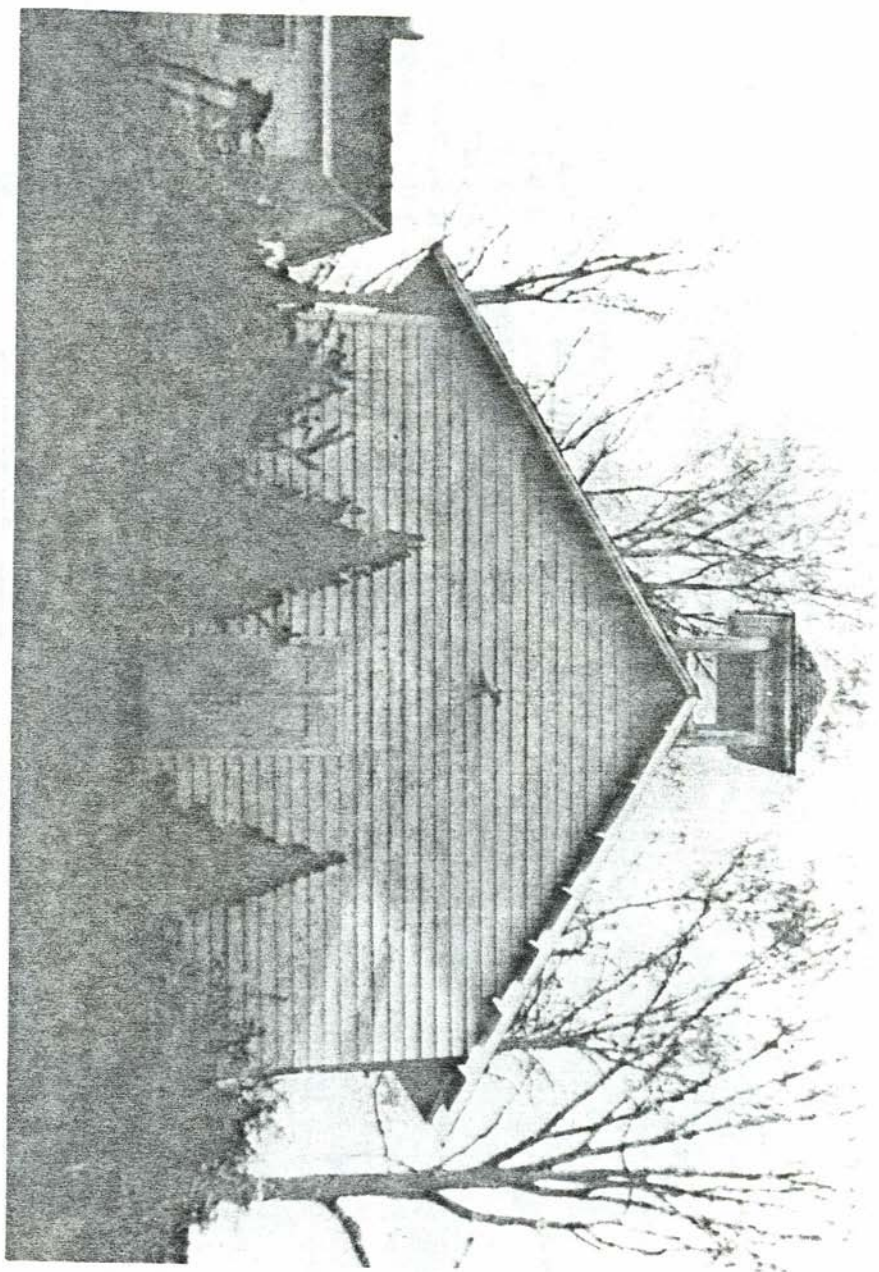
J. Elwood Carroll. A History of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. Greensboro: McCulloch & Swain, 1939.

The Journal of Francis Asbury.

Deeds registered with the Chatham County Register of Deeds

Persons Interviewed:

Clatie Daffron
Elizabeth Glass Faust
Sara Lou Lindley Garner
Emma Campbell Glass
Marvin Glass
Clifford and Clearl Kimrey
Robert and Jewell Morris
J. R. "Kay" Thompson



Hickory Grove Church
Building which served from
late 1880's until 1952

Shown here are the new and old buildings of Hickory Grove church on the Siler City Circuit. Built at a cost of approximately \$15,000, the new structure is almost free of debt. Attendance at both Sunday school and worship services has increased greatly and the membership has shown

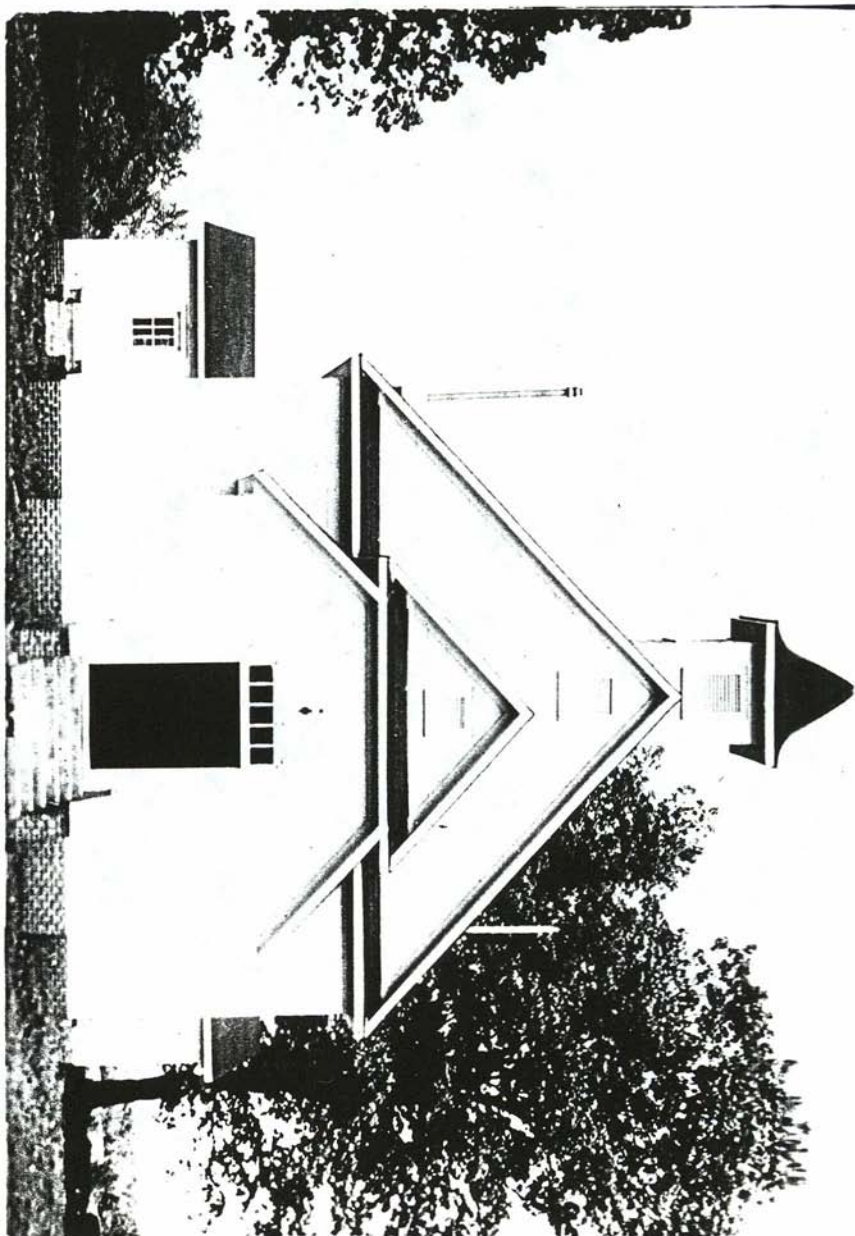
great interest not only in the building program, but in the entire program of



the church. Rev. J. H. Parrish is pastor. The new building is shown at left.

Page Seven

Article and Picture
which appeared in the
N.C. Christian Advocate
October 9, 1952



Present Sanctuary Building
at time of dedication in 1955



After the Dedication Service
in 1955

L to R: Mr. Walter Smith,
Mr. Kermit Pike, Rev. O.L.
Hathaway, District Superin-
tendent; Rev. Harvey Johnson,
Pastor.

Service of Dedication
EDUCATIONAL BUILDING
Hickory Grove United
Methodist Church



PRESIDING BISHOP
ROBERT BLACKBURN
Raleigh, N. C.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
JAMES H. McCALLUM
Sanford, N. C.

MINISTER
JOHN D. MITCHELL
Siler City, N. C.

Cover of the Dedication
Bulletin for the Hut
March 25, 1973