



MIDWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

STELLA, NORTH CAROLINA

1891 - 1980

Dedication

This history of Midway Church is dedicated to Miss Dixie Mattocks. The information she was able to give about the early days of the church made writing this history possible.

Acknowledgment

I wish to express my thanks to all those who in any way helped in compiling this history of Midway United Methodist Church. It would be impossible to name all of them, but I would like to mention Mrs. Genola Coston (deceased) and Miss Dixie Mattocks, who were so helpful with the early years.

If there are errors, please offer suggestions for corrections to be made when the history is revised.

HISTORY OF
MIDWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1891 - 1980

BY
KATHERINE COSTON

The present Midway United Methodist Church is a result of the efforts of two neighboring communities separated by the White Oak River. The Stella Methodist Church began about 1891 with services held in the schoolhouse whenever preachers were available. Several years later Mrs. Mollie Barker gave a piece of land located across from the present Stella post office to be used as the site for a church.

In the meantime the Lebanon Church, about four miles from Swansboro on the Belgrade-Swansboro road had become inactive. About 1903 this building was dismantled, moved to Stella, and rebuilt on the Barker property with the necessary improvements to make it usable. The cemetery at the site of the Lebanon Church is still in use.

At Silverdale during the years around 1920, services were held on Sunday afternoon at the Barber Schoolhouse. On two Sundays a month the Presbyterian minister from Pollocksville preached; the other two Sundays each month the Methodist minister from Swansboro preached.

In 1922 a deed for an acre of land for a church site was given to the Methodist Conference by Graham and Ettie Wiggins. C.M. Coston, Clen Freeman, and George D. Mattocks were named as trustees in the transaction.

About this same time, the people at Stella saw the need to build a new Church but were not able to build on their lot because of lack of a proper deed. Under the guidance of Rev. L.R. Gains, it was

decided to build across the river on a piece of land donated by Mrs. Mollie Mattocks. The Silverdale group decided to join this group instead of building on the Wiggins property, so the Wiggins property was returned to the donors.

Building the new church was a community effort. The men cut logs, sawed them into lumber and built the church themselves. Each day that the men worked the ladies of the community served them "dinner on the grounds". The building was a frame structure, consisting of a sanctuary with a Sunday School room on either side. The outside walls were covered with cedar shingles which were later replaced by white asbestos shingles. The floors were bare wood. The pews and other furnishings were moved from the Stella church. The pulpit Bible, which had been given to the Stella Church by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Pelletier, was also used.

The new church was named Midway because it was midway between Stella and Silverdale, the two communities it served. The cornerstone to this building is dated 1926 and named as its first trustees C.M. Coston, Rudolph Pelletier, and George Mattocks.

For the next 10 or 15 years Midway Church struggled for survival. Those were the depression years when money was about "as scarce as hen's teeth." Meeting the budget, small compared to the present, was difficult and sometimes impossible. Services were held twice a month, one morning and one very poorly attended evening service. In winter the building was warmed

(slightly) by a wood stove, with no heat in the Sunday School rooms. In the summer hand fans were much in use. Windows were raised to let in air and the mosquitoes swarmed in. There was always an abundance of wasps, so that one's attention was often diverted from the sermon. It was hard to concentrate while watching the direction of the nearest wasp to keep from being stung.

The first vacation church school was held when Rev. Charles Mercer was pastor. Ninety-four students of all ages attended. Older students met at night under the leadership of Ray Allen, a Duke student. The entire group contributed their nickels and dimes and purchased Sallman's "Head of Christ", which hangs over the guest registry desk in the present church. Interest generated by the Bible School brought a new interest in Sunday School and resulted in increased attendance. Each year since then Midway has had a Bible School, but with a smaller enrollment.

In June 1943 a cemetery was started. Huey Morton, a drowning victim, was the first person to be buried there.

At this time there were five churches on the charge: Midway, Bethlehem, Swansboro, Oak Grove, and Queen's Creek. Pastors were very busy trying to serve the various congregations. In 1956 the Swansboro charge was divided. Queen's Creek and Oak Grove became a charge and Midway was placed with Bethlehem. Swansboro became a station. These churches had a few years earlier been transferred from the Wilmington District to the New Bern District.

Rev. Hilary Bryant became the first pastor for the Midway-Bethlehem charge. There was no parsonage, so he lived at the home of Mrs. Alice Guthrie. In the meantime plans were being made and money raised to build a parsonage. It was decided to build at Stella on land donated by Gerald and Lionel Pelletier. When Rev. John Casey came to the charge, the parsonage was not finished, so a house was rented in the Bethlehem community where he lived until the parsonage was completed. Mrs. Miriam Casey helped the parsonage committee select and buy the furnishings for the three bedroom brick house.

During Rev. Casey's pastorate, the people at Midway decided to build a new church. After much deliberation on whether the new church would be at Stella or on the original Midway site, it was decided to build on the Midway site. More acreage was required in order to qualify for aid from the Duke Endowment Fund. This was made possible by the gift of additional land by Mr. George D. Mattocks, Miss Dixie Mattocks and Mrs. Pauline Sanders. Milton Gillette was chosen to serve as chairman of the building committee.

Just as building the first Midway Church was a community effort, so was building the second Midway Church a community effort. Everyone pitched in to raise the money to start the building. The Methodist Women got busy with bazaars and suppers; there was an annual fish fry; there were many projects, pledges, and donations. Finally came the groundbreaking conducted by Rev. Paul Evans and District Superintendent Grady Dawson assisted by Gerald Pelletier, Lee Parker and others.

The new church was on its way. Again logs were donated by members and sawed into lumber by Curt Holland and his assistants. The men of the church did as much of the work as they could.

Finally on November 1, 1970, the first service, the Service of Consecration, was held in the present Midway United Methodist Church, conducted by Rev. Harold Elliot, the pastor, and Rev. Charles Mercer, Superintendent of the New Bern District. From that time the first Sunday in November has been observed as Homecoming Day.

What a contrast between the old and new buildings! The new church was a brick structure with stained glass windows behind the pulpit and red carpet in the sanctuary. There were five Sunday School rooms and a fully furnished kitchen. Best of all, there were central heat and air, a water cooler and BATHROOMS. The pews and pulpit furnishings which had been donated by the Pelletier family when Rev. Mercer was pastor were moved from the old church. The pulpit Bible, donated by Rev. and Mrs. Casey was also moved.

Another milestone was reached when on September 22, 1974, the building could be dedicated. Rev. Vance Lewis led this service with Bishop Robert Blackburn delivering the sermon.

In 1979 Midway participated in the Ministers Pension Fund Crusade under the able leadership of Spencer Parker. Pledges surpassed the amount requested by the Conference. Three times Midway has won the attendance bell at the district lay

rally - 1977, 1978, and 1979.

The members of Midway Church were saddened when their pastor George Eubanks, Jr., passed away June 13, 1980 after suffering a heart attack two weeks earlier. During the period without a pastor Ralph Freeman, Spencer Parker and Henry Jenkins held services each Sunday.

Throughout the years various organizations have been influential in the church program. In 1933 the Ladies Auxiliary was organized with Mrs. J.A. (Fannie) Mattocks as president. Mrs. Mattocks held this office for several years. The auxiliary was named the Lillian Finch Auxiliary for the pastor's wife who helped in its organization. Through the years the women's group has been known by several names, the more recent ones being the Women's Society of Christian Service and United Methodist Women. The women have worked diligently to raise money for the extra things which the budget did not cover. They have supported children at the Methodist Orphanage and responded to various needs of the community. Since the organization of the group several of its members have been honored with life memberships. Today the United Methodist Women has a membership of 12 with Mrs. Guy Parker serving as president.

The Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized in 1942 by Mrs. Katherine Coston with the help of the pastor, Rev. Warren Petteway. The first president was Bill Tyndall. David Holland was the second. This group was quite active, participating in workshops, rallies, weekend retreats,

community affairs and worship activities until about 1970. By this time there were so few young people of the MYF age the group disbanded. Now that there is a larger number of children in the church, perhaps in the near future we can again have a Methodist Youth Fellowship at Midway.

A Men's Club was begun about 1965 when Rev. Paul Evans was pastor. Milton Gillette served as the first president. The club was later disbanded. The Men's Club was again organized with the help of Grier Garrick of Jacksonville and received its charter in 1978. Ralph Freeman was elected president. The club has been instrumental in carrying out many church programs.

Today Midway Church marches on under the leadership of Rev. Wayne Thomas, who became pastor August 1, 1980. Ralph Freeman is Church Lay Leader and Sunday School Superintendent. Milton Gillette is Chairman of the Administrative Board. There is a membership of about 165, a small but active Sunday School, United Methodist Women, and Men's Club. The church building is valued at about \$120,000.

As we continue forward let us not forget the hard work, faith and sacrifice of those who have preceded us, by making it possible for us to have, not only the facilities which we enjoy, but a religious heritage, rich in tradition, heartwarming and inspiring. We have had our highs and lows, our joys and our sorrows, which have helped us become stronger Christians. Let us strive to help Midway Church continue serving the community of which it is a part.

Sunday School Superintendents of
Midway United Methodist Church

Otis Poole
C.M. Coston
George Mattocks
Wilber Jenkins
Hosea Parker
Spencer Parker
Harold Gray
Leora Turner
Ralph Freeman

MEMORIALS

The Lighting Effects given in memory of Gerald Pelletier, III.

The Candle Holders and Bible Stand in memory of Mr. and Mrs. S.W. Everitt, given by Clara and Harry Cooper.

The Registry Desk in memory of Adrian L. Morris, by his wife, Mrs. Bessie Q. Morris.

The Lawn Bulletin Board and Masonry Encasement in memory of Mr. and Mrs. William D. Harget, given by the Hargett Family.

The Storm Doors in memory of Alonza Wetherington given by Mrs. Pearl Wetherington.

The Awnings over doors given in memory of J.W. Young by Mrs. Beatrice Young.

The Pew Cushions and Flower Tables in memory of Mrs. Myrtle Pelletier given by the Lionel Pelletier Family.

The Baptismal Font and Hymnals given in memory of Gerald Pelletier by friends.

The Collection Plates in memory of Charles Barker, Sr. and Charles Barker, Jr. given by Mrs. Katie Barker Pelletier and Mrs. Judy Barker.

GIFTS

Duke Endowment - \$10,000.00

The Church Grounds given by the Mattocks Family and Estate.

The Pulpit Bible given by Reverend and Mrs. John F. Casey.

The Refrigerator-Freezer given by Mr. and Mrs. L.W. Pelletier

The Guest Book given by Mr. and Mrs. Leland Morris.

Choir Robes given by the United Methodist Youth Fellowship.

The Rock for Driveways given by Mr. John R. Jones.

Kitchen Range given by Mr. and Mrs. John H. Gillette.

The Silverware given by Mrs. Pearl Morris.

The Hymnals, Vacuum Cleaner and the Memorial Plaque, given by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

The Church Steeple given by Mr. Harold Parker in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Parker.

MIDWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PASTORS
1891 to 1978
(Formerly Stella Methodist Church)

Onslow Circuit

1891-1893	J.L. Keen
1894	G.W. Starling
1895	Daniel Reid
1896	Daniel Reid and Joseph Dixon
1897	C.P. Snow and Joseph Dixon
1898-1899	J.A. Rouse
1900-1902	F.S. Becton
1903-1904	W.A. Jenkins
1905-1908	D.C. Geddy
1909-1912	J.T. Stanford
1913	R.L. Carraway
1914-1916	E.C. Sell
1917-1919	T.W. Lee

(Stella transferred to Swansboro Circuit 1919)

1919-1920	W.B. Humble
1921-1922	T.W. Siler
1923-1924	D.A. Futrell
1925-1926	L.R. Gains

(In 1926 Stella Church was moved across the river to its present location and was renamed Midway Methodist Church)

1927	M.V. Hodges
1928	W.H.J. Winstead

WILMINGTON DISTRICT

Swansboro Circuit

1929-1930 T.B. Hough
1931 Ernest B. Bell
1932-1933 S.S. Ellington (Herman Finch)
1934-1935 C.W. Barbee
1936-1939 C.B. Long
1940 G.C. Wood
1941-1942 Warren Petteway
1943-1945 C.H. Mercer
1946-1947 H.L. Rogers
1948-1952 J.K. Worthington

NEW BERN DISTRICT

Swansboro Charge

1953-1955 W.R. Johnson

Midway-Bethlehem Charge

1956-1958 J.H. Bryant
1958-1964 John Casey
1964-1969 P.W. Evans
1969-1970 David L. Gould
1970-1971 Harold Elliott
1971-1975 Vance Lewis
1975-1977 C.R. Ethridge
1977-1979 Gordon E. Allen, Jr.
1979-1980 George Eubanks, Jr.
August 1, 1980 Wayne Thomas

