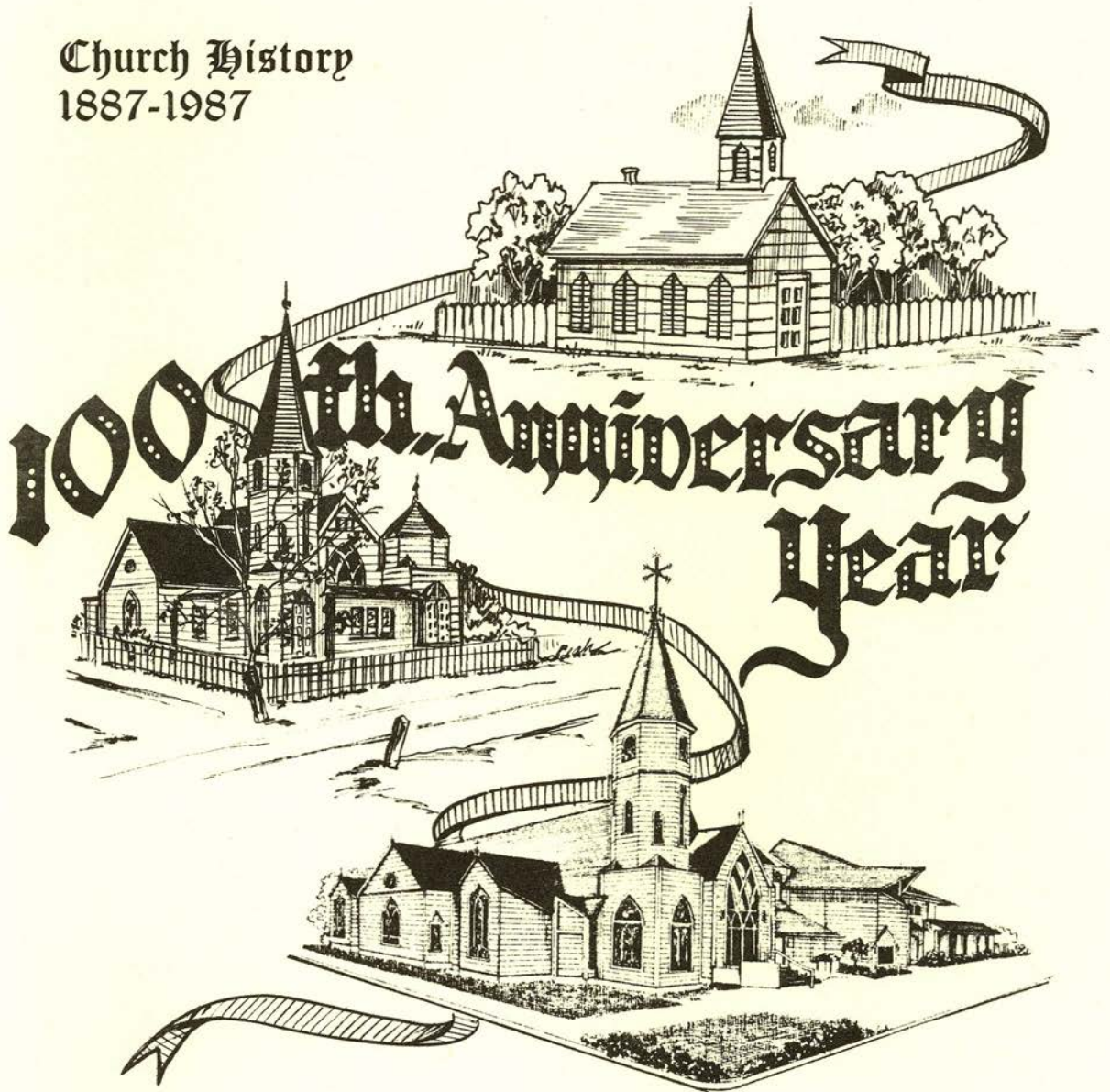


Church History  
1887-1987



## Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church

302 Ananias Dare Street



Manteo, North Carolina 27954



J. W. Scott, Pastor

## INTRODUCTION

The following history of the first 100 years of Mount Olivet United Methodist Church has been compiled as a result of many hours of research, reading, and conversation.

Although there have been several accounts of the founding of the Church written from time to time, unfortunately, some discrepancies exist.

In an effort to resolve those discrepancies, much research has been undertaken in the office of the Dare County Register of Deeds; and this has produced what are believed to be conclusive answers to questions.

Other sources consulted include early records of the Virginia Conference of the Methodist Church, Edna Evans Bell's unpublished book on Roanoke Island history, an early history of the Methodist Church in what are now parts of Dare County, files at the Dare County Library, and files of "The Coastland Times."

Many thanks are due to the church staff, Jean Basnight and Carolyn Johnson; to Dotty Fry, Register of Deeds; to The Reverend E. Cliff Shoaf; to Edna Evans Bell; Marjorie Wescott; and Isabelle Warren, granddaughter of the Reverend Joseph Lennon, early circuit rider.

The history that is set forth in the following pages is a tribute to the faith and dedication of many hundreds of men, women, and children who have been members of the congregation of the Church established 100 years ago.

With that spirit, the Church will continue to grow and to serve God and the people of Roanoke Island for decades to come.

Martha and Jack Hohmann  
Church Historians

**COVER** by Leah Shock

**THE HISTORY OF  
MOUNT OLIVET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
1887 - 1987**

When Dare County, the youngest of the Albemarle counties, was formed in 1870 from Currituck, Hyde, and Tyrrell counties, Methodism had been established in the area for many years. The Camden Circuit had reached "The Banks" in 1785, and in 1789 the "Pamlico Circuit" had extended eastward to Roanoke Island.

Methodism was spread by a group of "circuit riders" who rode through the countryside to preach in homes or whatever meeting place they could find. In the 1880's Roanoke Island and Dare County were in the Virginia Circuit, Murfreesboro District, and in 1884 the Reverend Joseph G. Lennon was sent down to minister to Bethany Church in Wanchese and others in the county which had been established as mission churches. The Reverend Lennon was returned each year for three years until sometime late in 1887 when he was assigned to Pasquotank.

Under the Reverend Lennon's leadership seven residents set about to establish a Methodist church in Manteo. These residents were — Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Evans, Mr. R. C. Evans, Mr. and Mrs. A. V. Evans, and Mr. and Mrs. S. E. Mann.

Mr. & Mrs. S. A. Griffin were Baptist and attended the North End church but were persuaded to join this group. Bill Melson, a clerk in the Evans & Mann store, also joined them. R. C. Evans, in the meantime, had married and his wife was added, and Mount Olivet was chartered with the above 11 members.

The earliest recorded deed of property acquired for Mount Olivet (Book B, page 525) is described as follows:

"This indenture made this 25th day of May 1887. Daniel W. Etheridge and wife Huamautha C. Etheridge and Daniel V. Etheridge of the County of Dare and State of N. C. of the one part, and Samuel E. Mann, Richard C. Evans, John W. Evans, George W. Creef, Jr. and Asa V. Evans, Trustees of the Methodist-Episcopal Church South of Manteo, County of Dare and State aforesaid of the other part. Witnesseth. That for and in consideration of the sum of Twenty-six and 50/100 (\$26.50) Dollars to them in hand paid, the receipt of which is hereby

acknowledged. We the said D. W. Etheridge and H. C. Etheridge his wife and Daniel V. Etheridge have given granted bargained and sold and by these presents doth give grant, bargain and sell unto the said S. E. Mann, R. C. and John W. Evans, George W. Creef, Jr. and Asa V. Evans, trustees of aforesaid and their successors in office a certain lot or parcel of land, lying and being on Roanoke Island in Manteo, Dare County and State of N. C. Bounded as follows: Beginning at a marked pine tree standing on the south side of the road. Known as the Etheridge and Chaddic road running a West south westerly course, along said road 80 yards to a post thence a South Southeasterly course on a line of an angle of 90 degrees from said road. 40 yards to a post thence on a parallel line an East north Easterly course containing one half acre more or less."

In the spring of 1887 John W. Evans, treasurer of Mount Olivet, and Clerk of the Superior Court in Dare County at the time, wrote to Superior Court clerks in many counties of North Carolina asking for a donation of one dollar to help build a Methodist church in Manteo. In our files are many replies stating that the dollar was enclosed or explaining why the writer could not afford to give because they were trying to build their own church. There is no record of how many dollars were collected in this fashion.

Letters to Mr. R. C. Evans in June of 1887 from D. S. Kramer & Son of Elizabeth City give estimates of the cost to build a church in Manteo. A list of building materials was found with these old papers. An invoice dated October, 1887 covering white paint, lead, raw oil, lamp-black, turpentine, zinc, roof paint, putty, etc., "to paint the church in Manteo," along with the bill for labor, totaled \$125 and was paid by John W. Evans, treasurer, in November of 1887. The conclusion to be drawn from the above mentioned papers and invoices is that the church was ready to be occupied in late 1887. This agrees with a Virginia Conference sketch of the Reverend Lennon written in 1901 which credits him with building three churches in the area — "one at Croatan, one at Manteo, and one at East Lake."

While the money was being raised and the church being built, the Reverend Lennon held services in the Dare County Courthouse.

At the 1888 spring term of the Dare County Superior Court five trustees were certified to handle the affairs of Mount Olivet. These were the same trustees who had purchased property on May 25, 1887, on which to build a church. They then applied to the Board of Church Extension of the Virginia Annual Conference for a grant. In their application they presented the following statistics: Number church members, 15; Number Sunday School children, 58; Trustees, 5. The value of the property was put at \$40.00 and secured by deed in fee simple with no mortgage. They further stated that the building was made of wood and was 32 x 50 feet. The cost when completed was \$1,500, and \$1,250 had been paid thereon. All the means of resources were "exhausted," and therefore a grant of \$250 was requested so that the church could be operated "free of debt."

The church was a one room building with a steeple, a vestibule and two small siderooms beside the main sanctuary. One of the siderooms was used for supplies, the other led to the belfry. A bell was installed in the steeple and was tolled for fires, funerals, etc. Even when a child became lost, the bell called the community together to search for him.

In the latter part of 1887 the Reverend R. H. Mullen was assigned as joint pastor of this church and other churches in the Dare Mission Circuit. He was the first pastor to occupy a parsonage purchased on December 17, 1887, by the seven trustees of the Roanoke Island and Dare Mission Circuit. This property was purchased from Z. E. Goodwin and wife for \$800 and was described as a "parcel of land together with all the houses and buildings in trust for the use and purpose of a parsonage or preacher's home for the benefit of the following religious societies of the M. E. Church South — Bethany on the south end of Roanoke Island and at Manteo, East Lake, and Mount Carmel at Croatan and Shiloh at Stumpy Point." These seven trustees also made an indenture on this same date to pay off the balance of \$600 due on the Goodwin property over a period of a few years.

A young boy was hired to build fires and ring the bells for the first church building. Bills from Griffin and Sample & Company, general merchandise, Manteo, show that wood, coal, and oil were used to heat the church with wood purchased at 50¢ for ¼ cord, oil at 15¢ a gallon, and ¼ ton of coal sold for \$2.25.

The cleaning was done by women of the congregation until after the church was expanded in 1907, when a regular sexton was hired.

In February of 1889 an organ was purchased for the church at a price of \$90 and \$1.00 for the stool from J. S. Ames of Norfolk. Mrs. S. A. Griffin was the first organist.

“Friends of Enlargement of Mount Olivet” were active and collecting money as early as 1902; but it was 1907, under the pastorate of the Reverend W. H. Brown, before this expansion took place. By this time the membership had grown to 200, and it was necessary to enlarge the building significantly. Classrooms were added all around, and the altar was moved from the back or south end of the sanctuary to the west wall where a choir loft was included.

The church was heated by a large stove in the back part of the sanctuary together with a small hand oil stove in each classroom. It was the duty of the sexton to light the stoves an hour or more before time for the services. Before electricity came to the island, the church was lighted by carbide lamps.

When the church was enlarged, there were two shorter pews with a space in between on the last two rows of pews in the middle section of the church. The heater was placed in this space and people tried to arrive early enough to sit near the stove as that was the only source of heat in the sanctuary. This separation of the pews remained until the renovation done in the 1980's, even though in 1938 the church board decided money should be raised to install a central heating system. Many years later, air conditioning was added.

After the church was enlarged in 1907, Mr. S. A. Griffin, Sunday School superintendent, saw a need for reading material for the children of the community and established a library of about 200 volumes in Mount Olivet Church. This was the first library in the area.

In 1914 the original parsonage was sold and on June 18, 1914 a larger parsonage nearer the church bought from J. B. Griffin and wife for \$1,800, paid for as follows: Sale of old parsonage, \$800; Manteo, \$300; Wanchese, \$200; and Board of Extension, \$500.

Manteo and Wanchese were a combined charge until 1924 when they separated, each with its own minister. At that time the parsonage was appraised at \$2,500 and Mount Olivet paid \$1,250 to Bethany at Wanchese for their share of the building. When The Reverend J. M. Jolliff arrived in 1925, he ministered full time to Mount Olivet.

By the late 30's and 40's, classrooms for the Sunday School were being created out of every available space, including the vestibule and furnace room. As many as three classes would be meeting in one small room and others were meeting in the sanctuary. Due to the foresight of W. F. Baum, Sunday School superintendent for 26 years, and E. M. Midgett, church treasurer, a lot adjacent to and to the west of the church property had already been purchased; and in 1947, under the ministry of The Reverend D. W. Charlton, an educational building was added.

About 1901 Miss Elizabeth Epps, a school teacher, took over the music and started the first choir. In later years Mrs. Rennie Griffin Williamson, daughter of Mrs. S. A. Griffin, came back to Manteo and developed an outstanding choir of 20 members. In June 1974 the present Allen organ was given to the church in memory of Mrs. Williamson by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph W. Pool, to honor her long years as organist and choir director and her efforts and devotion which resulted in the evolution of an exceptionally fine choir and high standards in the selection of church music.

An additional lot west of the educational building was purchased from the estate of W. F. Baum in 1968 for future use, and plans for the expansion of the educational building into the current fellowship hall and a finance drive were started under the leadership of the Reverend Henry A. Bizzell, Jr., in 1975, with ground breaking on March 28, 1977. The Reverend M. W. Warren, Jr., became pastor in the spring of 1977, and progress continued on the finance drive. Construction of the building went forward under Mr. Warren's pastorate and was finally dedicated on October 3, 1982, by which time the Reverend E. C. Shoaf was the pastor.

As Dare County population began to increase, so did the congregation. Gains in membership from 500 to 750 in eight years made seating impossible, and pledges were solicited in May of 1983 so that a major enlargement and renovation could be accomplished.

Stephens & Francis, architects of New Bern, were engaged, and the reconstruction and renovation planned was to maintain, as far as possible, the appearance and exterior characteristics of the historic building. Interior work included incorporating part of the ceiling of the original sanctuary, increased seating capacity, and rearranging details of the

chancel and the choir seating. Enlargement was obtained by moving walls outward and a new entrance and narthex constructed on Ananias Dare Street. In preparation for the change in the sanctuary, the congregation moved solemnly from the sanctuary into the new, temporary meeting place in the fellowship hall, carrying hymn books, altar furniture, and other items. Many fixtures from the old church were auctioned off to make room for Cuthrell & Daniels, builders, to begin work. Old stained glass windows were carefully removed and restored and along with many new windows were incorporated in the new building.

Consecration of the new building was held on Sunday, June 16, 1985, with six ministers present. Taking part in the service were The Reverend E. C. Shoaf, pastor during the building program; The Reverend A. P. Hill, Jr., Superintendent of the Elizabeth City District; Bishop C. P. Minnick, Jr.; The Reverend M. W. Warren, Jr., former pastor of Mount Olivet; The Reverend Adrian Brown, former Mount Olivet Pastor; and The Reverend Julian W. Scott, the new pastor of the church.

Recently, Stephens & Francis won the Dumont Award for church architecture for the firm's work on the renovation of the sanctuary of Mount Olivet United Methodist Church. This award was for work in a three-state area.

With the award, Stephens & Francis received a suitable plaque and a prize of \$1,000. The firm has given \$900 of the cash prize to the church for its building fund to be used for 12 wood relief panels depicting the 12 disciples of Christ. They will be mounted in the sanctuary when completed, to honor the building committee of the congregation which worked with the architects. The remaining \$100 of the cash prize went to the work of The Reverend Cliff Shoaf, associate director for Christian Nurture and Leadership Development, who was pastor at Mount Olivet during the renovation work. The Reverend Shoaf, in turn, donated the \$100 to the building fund.

The present enrollment of the church is slightly over 800.



In the early days of the church, annual conferences were held in the late fall as it was necessary to wait until the crops were in and the money in hand before paying the ministers' salaries. There was also less disruption of school-age children if moved during the holidays. Therefore, new ministers to an area arrived in November or December.

After The Reverend Joseph G. Lennon helped establish Mount Olivet in Manteo, the following ministers have served for the first 100 years:

Rev. R. H. Mullen	1887 - 1890
Rev. I. A. White	1890 - 1891
Rev. John R. Sawyer	1891 - 1893
Rev. C. D. Langston	1893 - 1897
Rev. John J. Barker	1897 - 1900
Rev. S. T. Moyle	1900 - 1902
Rev. A. J. Parker	1902 - 1905
Rev. E. R. Welch	1905 - 1906
Rev. W. H. Brown	1906 - 1909
Rev. A. W. Price	1909 - 1912
Rev. J. T. Draper	1912 - 1914
Rev. M. W. Hester	1914 - 1916
Rev. J. C. Humble	1916 - 1918
Rev. E. L. Stack	1918 - 1919
Rev. L. M. Chaffin	1919 - 1921
Rev. J. Bascom Hurley	1921 - 1922
Rev. A. W. Price	1922 - 1924
Rev. J. M. Jolliff	1925 - 1929
Rev. W. F. Walters	1929 - 1933
Rev. A. E. Brown	1933 - 1937
Rev. R. R. Grant	1937 - 1939
Rev. M. W. Maness	1939 - 1944
Rev. D. W. Charlton	1944 - 1948
Rev. J. H. Overton, Jr.	1948 - 1950
Rev. H. R. Ashmore	1951 - 1955
Rev. L. A. Aitken	1955 - 1959
Rev. Harold F. Leatherman	1959 - 1963
Rev. Herman Winberry	1963 - 1968
Rev. Henry B. Lewis	1968 - 1973
Rev. Henry A. Bizzell, Jr.	1973 - 1977
Rev. M. W. Warren, Jr.	1977 - 1982
Rev. E. C. Shoaf	1983 - 1985
Rev. Julian W. Scott	1985 -