

HISTORY
of the
Newton Grove
United Methodist Church
1870 - 1970



OCTOBER 18, 1970

NEWTON GROVE, N. C.

The Two-Church Builders

John G. Saxe

A famous King would build a Church,
A temple vast and grand;
And, that the praise might be his own,
He gave a strict command
That none should add the smallest gift
To aid the work he planned.

And when the mighty dome was done,
Within the noble frame,
Upon a tablet broad and fair,
In letters all aflame
With burnished gold, the people read
The royal builder's name.

Now, when the King, elate with pride,
That night had sought his bed,
He dreamed he saw an Angel come
(A halo round his head,)
Erase the royal name, and write
Another in its stead.

What could it mean? Three times that night
That wondrous vision came;
Three times he saw that Angel hand
Erase that royal name,
And write a woman's in its stead,
In letters all aflame.

Whose could it be? He gave command
To all about his throne,
To seek the owner of the name
That on the tablet shone;
And so it was the courtiers found
A widow poor and lone.

The King, enraged at what he heard,
Cried: "Bring the culprit here!"
And to the woman, trembling sore,
He said: "'Tis very clear
That you have broken my command:
Now let the truth appear!"

"Your majesty", the widow said:
"I can't deny the truth:
I love the Lord, --my Lord and yours, --
And so, in simple sooth,
I broke your majesty's command
(I crave your royal ruth).

And since I had no money, sire,
Why, I could only pray
That God would bless your majesty;
And when along the way
The horses drew the stones, I gave
To one a wisp of hay."

"Ah! now I see", the King Exclaimed,
"Self-glory was my aim;
The woman gave for love of God,
And not for worldly fame!
'Tis my command the tablet bear
The pious widow's name."

A Methodist preacher, Mr. Robbins, held services in the East School house near the O. C. Williams home place about the year 1869. The same year, the Rev. Alford from Clinton, preached in a school building located near the J. F. Westbrook old home. In each of these schools, Sunday School was conducted during the summer months. Rev. F. A. Bishop was appointed the first pastor of these missions. The Church was organized about 1870.

The pastors who have followed Mr. Bishop are: Daniel Culbreth, Z. T. Harrison, S. D. Peeler, D. A. Watkins, E. Pope, Z. J. Needham, J. J. Barker, Judson Vernon, J. F. Usery, W. A. Jenkins, W. F. Galloway, J. C. Humble, W. Y. Everton, R. A. Burton, N. H. Guyton, J. J. Midgette, S. W. Phillips, W. J. Underwood, W. B. Humble, J. F. Starnes, L. A. Tilley, J. A. Daily, W. B. Cotton, R. L. Hethcox, T. H. House, McDonald McLamb, Charles Tilley, J. A. Cooper, J. C. Martinson, C. H. Beale, A. B. Falls, Jr., W. S. Burns.

The building materials for the first church were furnished and prepared by the men of the church and the Masons who had part interest in it. They, the Masons, held their meeting in the second story after the building was completed. The carpenters were Matthew and "Bill" McLamb. The church was located back of the present H. B. Tart home, on the Arthur Lee land. The era of this building program was near 1870-1871.

During the pastorate of Rev. J. C. Humble in 1900, the members decided a more comfortable church was needed. Again, the materials were furnished and prepared by the members. This second church was near the present H. I. Rayford, Sr. old home with the parsonage just across the road.

it seems fitting to mention a few of those who took upon themselves some of the outstanding responsibilities: Isaac Williams, a charter member, helped to organize the first church and lived to worship in all the churches except the present one. T. S. Williams was always present at all church meetings, both local and charge. J. F. Westbrook was very active as a worker. Mrs. R. B. Wilson was organist and an unexcelled Sunday School teacher. Mrs. Sallie Williams was a consecrated worker; also, Mrs. Bettie Williams. E. F. Lee, in young manhood, consecrated his life for the ministry. Mrs. H. I. Rayford never tired in her loyal leadership of the children. Mrs. A. T. Tart taught Sunday School for years and continues to add her influence to the same class, which has been named in her honor. Rev. Henry A. Bizzell, Jr. consecrated his life during his early teens and is now a Methodist minister. The present organist, Mrs. Annie Lee Britt Warren is superlative in her loyalty and efficiency. Many of the young people have carried their talents into new communities which are their homes now by reason of marriage.

At the April, 1944 meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service, improvements in comfort and appearance of the Newton Grove Methodist Church were discussed. A committee was appointed to serve with additional representatives chosen from the church membership.

The needs were brought before the Sunday School the following Sunday, April 23. The additional committee members were named. This committee, with the pastor, Rev. Hethcox, met soon after and unanimously agreed that the present building needed attention.

Three plans were discussed. The plan adopted

later by the membership read as follows:

"The members of the Newton Grove Methodist Church will begin raising a building fund to cover a period of time, for the purpose of constructing a new church when the conditions of the country (World War II) permits, with the understanding that if financial conditions become too insecure, the funds remain untouched in their investments for a reasonable period of time or be returned to the donors.

In June, an executive committee was appointed, namely:

1. Chairman: N. C. Lee
2. Treasurer: R. D. Weeks
3. Secretary: Mrs. Allen Westbrook
4. Planning: Designing Grounds: H. B. Tart
5. Purchasing and Building: N. C. Lee
6. Finance: Women of the Church
7. Furnishings: Mrs. H. A. Bizzell
8. Landscape: Mesdames A. W. Weeks
A. W. Bizzell
9. General Advisor: Pastor in Charge

A pledge service was held August 6. At this service Rev. R. L. Hethcox used as his text "Unless the Lord Build a House, We Build in Vain." R. D. Weeks spoke on the need of a new church from the standpoint of the Sunday School. Mrs. James Britt spoke on behalf of the WSCS. Miss Doris Bizzell represented the Youth Fellowship. The Sue Wilson Warren Society of Christian Service was represented by the then little Miss Mary Jo Warren. Pledges amounted to \$3,200.

An application was made to the Duke Endowment for funds to aid in the erection of the building.

A grant of \$6,000 was made.

Later an application was made to the National Board of Missions for a loan of \$10,000. A grant of \$1,000 was made as a gift; \$9,000 was made as a loan.

Beginning in September 1944, barbecue, chicken stew, and ham suppers became a frequent occurrence.

The Sunday School classes made monthly contributions. The primary class, under the guidance of Mrs. H. I. Rayford, Sr. and Miss Linda Williams, never failed in its contributions. Their pennies and nickels came to a grand total of \$118.21.

A harvest sale and home coming day became a yearly feature, beginning on Thanksgiving, November 22, 1945.

Rev. J. F. Starnes donated \$10.00 to be used toward a memorial center in the church. This amount was added to by the Starnes children and others. After the passing away of Mr. Starnes this fund was used to purchase the left front window in the chancel as a memorial to the Rev. and Mrs. Starnes.

The right front window is in memory of Rev. E. Frank Lee. This was given by his daughter, Mrs. Preston L. Fowler, Jr., and other relatives.

The middle front window honors Rev. Henry A. Bizzell, Jr.. This was donated by his parents and sisters.

The windows in the nave are in memory of some of the forefathers of the church, donated by loved ones. Several of the pews are also memorials. They are so marked.

A constant pleasure to the congregation is the music. The organ was given by Mrs. P. C. Weeks and her late husband in memory of their son, Percy Jr., who was killed in early manhood in a car accident. The piano was given at the time in memory of Mrs. Maggie Hudson and in honor of Mrs. H. I. Rayford for her faithfulness as elsewhere mentioned.

During the period of time to 1951, Rev. Thomas House gave counsel concerning the building program.

The Rose Hill Presbyterian Church was chosen as a pattern by which to build. Everyone assisted in contributing materials and getting these and purchased materials on the site.

In February 1952, plans were made to move the old church back and build the new one on the same ground on which the old one stood.

Monday morning, October 13, 1952, ground breaking ceremonies were observed. Rev. McDonald McLamb turned the first shovel full of dirt.

Much of the frame work was done by volunteer local labor. The brick work was done by Edward Dail of La Grange. Many deserve commendation for the great amount and quality of work done. As here-to-fore stated, it is impossible to determine the rate of value of each effort, but note must be made of the work and supervision of the inside finishings by A. W. Weeks.

The furnishings were made and installed by the Page Church Furniture Co., Albemarle, N. C. The kitchen was completely furnished and equipped by an anonymous donor, known to us as the "Good Fairy."

The first service was held at sunrise on Easter Morning 1955. Rev. Charles Tilley preached at this time. The formal opening service was held September 17, 1955. The congregation gathered in the old church. A short farewell program was given and then the group silently went in a body to the new church. Rev. R. L. Hethcox preached. Rev. J. A. Cooper was in charge of the service.

Rev. J. C. Martinson, 1959-1960, inspired and assisted in plans to retire the church debt in the fall of 1960.

Dedication services were held November 6, 1960 with the district superintendents, Rev. M. L. Lawrence, bringing the morning message, "Love The Church". Rev. C. H. Beale, the pastor presided.

The history of the church to that date was placed in the church cornerstone which was sealed at a fitting ceremony concluding the day's program.

Improvements and additions of note have been made since the fall of 1960.

An outdoor bulletin board in memory of Mr. and Mrs. H. I. Rayford, Sr. has been erected on the front grounds of the church. The chancel and aisles of the nave were carpeted in 1967. The nursery has been carpeted and the narthex linoleum tiled. In 1969 an air conditioning unit was installed. The Fidelis Sunday School Class promoted painting the fellowship hall, and chancel of the church. Mrs. Laura Taylor made a gift of a red and white pulpit cover and book mark.

ADDITIONAL HONORARY AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

1. Altar Set - Cross, vases and candle holders
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Bizzell
By The Children
2. Bible for lecturn - A Friend.
3. Attendance and Hymnal Record Boards
In memory of Mr. and Mrs. George Warren
By Mrs. Maude Warren Garrason
4. Brass Urn
In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Lisker Williams
By Mrs. Luna Williams McKay
5. Silver Vase
In memory of Mr. and Mrs. James A. Bryan
By The Children
6. Wall Mirror - For Brides
In memory of Mr. James Britt
By Mrs. Ruth Warren Britt
7. Linoleum Tile on Fellowship Hall Floor
Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Weeks

The history of the Newton Grove United Methodist Church attests that materially it has improved and advanced from a cold, unadorned, borrowed school room to a structure of beauty and comfort. Perhaps, if this church could speak, the question it would pose would be, "You have built these temples glorious, have the builders also grown?"

This is a question that must be reckoned with. Will our names bear the stress of time and when reviewed in days to come be as revered as the names of our fore-runners who have given us the spiritual and church heritage that is ours today.