

HISTORY

of

PLYMOUTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1827 - 1977

WRITTEN

for

SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

FEBRUARY 13th., 1977

HISTORY OF PLYMOUTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

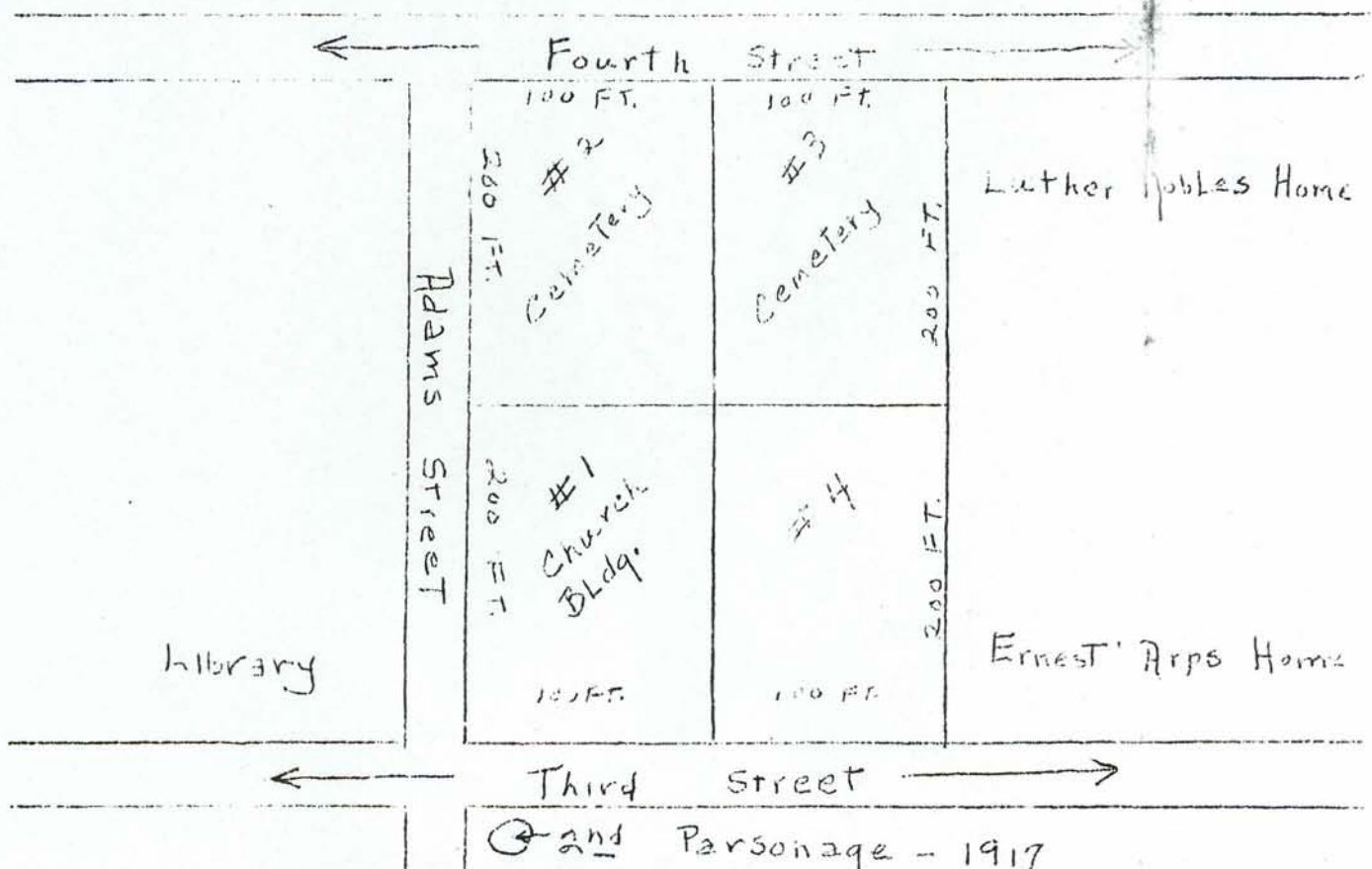
On February 15th., 1827, Plymouth was named as a pastoral appointment by the Virginia Conference, in session at Petersburg, Virginia. It was in the Roanoke District until 1838, when it became part of the Washington District. The first minister was John Kerr, serving both towns of Plymouth and Washington. In time setting, John Quincy Adams was president of our country when the Plymouth Methodist Episcopal Church was founded, and many things we now consider necessities, such as electric lighting and power, the telephone, the telegraph, the sewing machine, to name a few, had not even been invented.

In May, 1894, this church was transferred to North Carolina Conference by the General Conference as it met in Memphis, Tennessee, and it became a charge in the newly-formed Elizabeth City District. Plymouth had the honor of entertaining the first conference of Elizabeth City District of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South on July 18-20, 1895. Sessions were held morning and evening of each day, with a sermon at each session. The conference was composed of one minister and four lay delegates from each of the eighteen pastoral charges, beside local preachers and members. According to the Roanoke Beacon of Friday, July 19, 1895, "Every boat and train since Wednesday has brought delegates to Conference." Our church is still a member of Elizabeth City District, North Carolina Conference.

Although the church was founded in 1827, the building was not erected until 1832, making it the oldest church in town; the date is inscribed over the front door. At that time, Plymouth was listed as the eighth largest town in the state, with a population of 660. Methodism was the second largest denomination in North Carolina, having 32 preachers and membership of 12,641.

The church property was acquired in four separate lots on four different dates, as follows: (See diagram at bottom of page)

- #1. On August 3, 1832, Samuel Hardison deeded lot #45, for the sum of \$40.00, to the church trustees "to build of worship for the Methodist Episcopal Church". The trustees at that time were: Joseph C. Norcom, John Cornell, John D. Bennet, Paul Cornell, and W. Beckwith.
- #2. On February 2, 1845, John Pike of Hyde County deeded lot #21 to trustees Charles Latham, Joseph Ramsey, Edward Windley, Wilson White, and William Bateman, "in consideration of the sum of \$1.00", for use as a cemetery. This lot was directly behind the church building, and a 25 foot square in the center was retained for the pike family burial plot.
- #3. On January 2, 1852, lot #22, which is directly behind Luther Nobles' home, was bought from John C. Pettijohn for the price of \$100.00. The cemetery has been extended to include this lot.
- #4. On December 1, 1853, lot #46, which is next to Ernest Arp's home and joins the church building lot #45, facing Third Street, was bought from Sarah Bennett for \$150.00.



The original church was a frame building, a photograph and a painting of which now hang in the small rooms off the vestibule. Its outstanding architectural feature was its tall steeple, enormous in size and measuring 105 feet from the church roof. In 1912, this steeple was toppled by a storm and was replaced with a lower one. Inside the sanctuary, there was a narrow balcony across the back of the room and extended partly down the sides. In its 150 years, this church has served the people of this area in many ways, being used, for example, as an emergency hospital during the Civil War Battle of Plymouth, and it has played an important part in Methodism in this section of the state.

A major renovation project was begun in May 1931, and the August 14th Roanoke Beacon of that same year published a picture of the finished church, with an announcement that services had been resumed the previous Sunday. In 1930, the church had received a \$1000.00 donation (his second donation) from Mr. C.W. Toms, president of Liggett and Myers Tobacco Company of New York, who had once taught school in Plymouth and attended this church. This provided the "nest egg" and incentive for the renovation project. At that time, the Reverend R.G.L. Edwards was pastor, and Mr. Ambrose L. Owens had general supervision of the construction work.

The church building was brick veneered, and the basement was excavated for the installation of a modern steam heating plant. The original windows, which extended almost to the floor, were shortened, and marbled green and white panes were put in. Wainscoting was added to the inside, and an addition was constructed on the rear of the church, extending back 14 feet, forming the present pulpit and choir space. "The Good Shepherd" stained glass window was installed at that time, and provided a beautiful, inspirational background for the altar, choir loft, and pulpit. The two stained glass windows on the front of the church were also installed during this renovation.

Soon afterwards, around 1934-1935, the first pipe organ was bought. Our present pipe organ, the third in our church history, was dedicated, together with memorial carillon chimes, in February 1971.

By 1939-1940, enough donations had been made to replace the earlier, plainer windows with beautiful stained glass memorial windows depicting events in the life of Christ. Matching doors divide the vestibule from the sanctuary.

Sunday School has been an important part of this church from its very beginning, with classes held in various parts of the building upon its completion in 1832 - in the "amen corner", in the choir stall, and in the balcony. In 1933, a log cabin was built, behind the church facing Adams Street, by a Sunday School teacher, Mr. Tom Burgess, and his class of boys. The log cabin was used for Sunday School classes and also for recreational purposes until it was replaced with a modern brick Educational Building in the 1950's. After the exterior of this building was completed, the church members and friends finished the interior, and the building was dedicated by Bishop Paul Garber on May 8th., 1955.

The organization of women of the church also has a long history. The Ladies' Aid Society was the first organized group, and records show that it existed before the turn of the century, but how long before is not known. The Missionary Society was organized in 1922, and its first project was the adoption of a Methodist Home orphan to be clothed and supported. Unification in 1939 brought into being the Woman's Society of Christian Service and the Wesleyan Service Guild. Then, these two groups combined locally as Womens Society of Christian Service in 1959, Predating this move in the general organization in 1959. Finally, when the Methodist and United Brethren denominations merged, the present name, United Methodist Women, was adopted in 1972.

The activities and services of our women's organizations have been too numerous to list, but, to name a few, they finished and furnished the kitchen when the Educational Building was built; in 1975, carpeted the church parlor and renovated its furnishings; carpeted the sanctuary twice; and with money raised through bazaars, serving meals, and various other projects have contributed to the pipe organ, church activity bus, and other funds. Two editions of an outstanding cook book, "Angels in the Kitchen", were very successful when printed in the early 1970's. In 1976, a large banner depicting our church history and suggesting, in appearance, a beautiful stained glass window was designed by Mrs. Suzanne Owens Cunningham and was reproduced in needlework on altar linen by a group of women in the church. It was displayed and much-admired at the Bicentennial Anniversary of the Carolina Circuit, held at Duke University on April 3, 1976. At present, the banner is on display in the church parlor.

In the history of the church, there have been three known parsonages. The first one, now numbered 418 Washington Street, was bought from D.B. Baxter and wife on December 23, 1913, for \$1250.00. Then, on June 25, 1917, trustees F.R. Johnston, J.C. Spruill, C.J. Norman, S.W. Beasley, G.W. Harrison, E.D. Carstarphen, and M.W. Norman, acting for the church, bought the house and lot #69, on the corner of Third and Adams Streets, directly across from the church, for its parsonage. The lot for the present parsonage, fronting on Latham Lane, was purchased from J. Shepherd Brinkley in July, 1944 for the price of \$500.00, with trustees G.W. Harrison, W.H. Clark, L.S. Thompson, E.F. Still, and W.V. Norman handling the transaction. The present parsonage was built on this lot, and on June 30, 1946, while the Reverend Theodore Jenkins was minister, it was dedicated by Bishop W.W. Peele.

In 1973, a committee appointed by our minister created the Susannah Wesley Room, a small room off the vestibule, making it a restful reception room and also a repository for many of our earlier treasured possessions. Here, our first communion service - a silver pitcher, chalice, and two small plates - given in 1876 by Mrs. Emma Norman, is displayed in a handsome pedestal cabinet, which was made and donated by Mr. Nelson White in 1960. Donations and gifts of members and friends of the church made possible the achievement of this committee, composed of: Mrs. Fritzi (Ruth) Winslow, Mrs. Robert (Olivia) Campbell, and Mrs. Edward (Kitty) Hill, Chairman.

1976 was, truly, a Bicentennial Year for Plymouth United Methodist Church, under the leadership of the Reverend Julian W. Scott. Three special Sunday morning services were held, with congregational, family dinners following. The first was on March 14th., with its theme "Mr. Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence". Bishop Robert Blackburn, introduced by Elizabeth City District Superintendent Reverend Norwood Jones, delivered the sermon, "An Endless Line of Splendor". The second was held on July 4th., an observance of John Wesley Day, using the order of communion service he sent from England in 1774. Our circuit-rider preacher (Reverend Scott), dressed in John Wesley outfit, arrived on horseback and was greeted by his congregation in colonial attire. The third service, on November 14th., featured Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Church membership now numbers 490, with all age groups participating in Sunday School, worship services, United Methodist Women, Men's Club, Chancel and Altar Choirs, Youth Fellowship Groups, and in Prayer and Mission Study Groups. Today, Plymouth United Methodist Church, built in 1832, still stands in the same peaceful, setting, back from the traffic of the street, surrounded by age-old cedars and the graves of many of its

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faithful members. May it continue to be a cherished heritage for many more generations.

Plymouth United Methodist Church, we salute you on the 150th anniversary of your founding and commend you on your accomplishments and influence over the years. We who today stand and serve here are repositories of a rich heritage. With the same faith, dedication, and measure of devotion, which was characteristic of our forebears, may we accept the challenge of the future. Remembering our past, we pray that we may do what is God's will to make this church His instrument now and in the years to come.

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."

John Wesley's Rule

MORE FACTS OF INTEREST

1. In February 1895, new lamps were put in the church.
2. In April 1895, the ladies' Aid Society had an ice cream supper in the Town Hall (present site of the Mini Park), for the benefit of the church.
3. In May 1895, Mr. Joseph Tucker was appointed by the ladies of the church to supervise cleaning the church yard and grave stones, trimming trees, etc. The Ladies assumed this responsibility again in the 1930's.
4. In April 1896, two workmen painted the tall steeple in half a day and were paid \$1.25 together, which was the current rate for a day's labor.
5. In December 1899, the ladies' Aid Society placed heaters near the pulpit and covered the entire floor with new carpet.
6. In May 1902, the Roanoke Beacon stated that "a series of meetings was held at the church, with 50 conversions, 40 reclamations, and 34 joining church".
7. In October 1903, the ladies of the Methodist Episcopal Church held a bazaar during court week and advertised in the Roanoke Beacon "You can eat cheaper with us than at the hotel". The menu was also printed:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ham-Turkey-Goose Chicken Salad Gel-tine and cream Ice Cream Minnehaha Cake Cheese Straws Coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oysters - stewed-raw fried Cranberry Sauce-Celery-Pickles Cream Almond Cake-Ambrosia Chocolate Cake-Jelly Roll-Fig Cake Cocoanut Cake-Caramel Cake Candy - Salted Peanuts Hot Chocolate
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8. No history of a Methodist Church would be complete without mentioning the Epworth League, forerunner of our present Methodist Youth Fellowship.
9. In early 1956, a lighted bulletin board was erected on the front lawn.
10. Two outstanding series of meetings were held, one in the 1950's with Bishop Ralph Cushman preaching, and the other with Dr. Harry Denman in 1961.

ADDENDUM

Information used in this history of Plymouth United Methodist Church, written as we prepare to commemorate its 150th birthday, has been obtained from much research in the church and in the courthouse, as well as newspaper records. Memory and "word-of-mouth" have also contributed some of our most interesting, although not always most accurate, information. No history is ever complete, and, as careful as one might be, there is always error. We hope that you and others will come forward with additional information which has been overlooked or is unknown at this writing. As we conclude this historical account of Plymouth United Methodist Church, we hope its readers will derive as much pleasure and satisfaction as we did in compiling it.

Sesquicentennial Committee:

Mrs. Edward (Kitty) Hill, Chairman

Mrs. Lawrence (Frances) Jones

Mrs. Leland (Doris) Thompson

February 13th. 1977

COMPLETE LIST OF MINISTERS

WHO

HAVE SERVED THIS CHURCH

FEBRUARY 15, 1827 - FEBRUARY 13, 1977

Virginia Conference

Plymouth named as pastoral appointment on February 15, 1827 Session of the Virginia Conference at Petersburg, Virginia.

1828	John Kerr, Washington and Plymouth, Roanoke District		
1829	Abraham Harrell, " " " " "		
1830	L.M. Lee, Plymouth, " "		
1831	Wilson Barclift, " " "		
1832	John D. Halstead, " " "		
1833	Abraham Harrell, " " "		
1834	Edward Wardsworth, " " "		
1835	Thomas R. Brame, Washington and Plymouth " "		
1836	J.M. Boatright, " " "		

North Carolina Conference

1837	Samuel Pearce, Plymouth, Roanoke District		
1838	William M. Jordan, Plymouth, Washington District		
1839	Ira T. Wyche, " " "		
1840-1841	Thompson Garrard, " " "		
1842	John Tillet, Plymouth and Tarboro " "		
1843	William Closs, Plymouth " "		
1844	Thomas P. Ricaud, " " "		
1845	Edgar L. Perkins, " " "		
1846	A.S. Andrews, " " "		
1847	Thomas B. Reeks, " " "		
1848	N.H. D. Wilson " " "		
1849-1850	Joel W. Tucker " " "		
1851	William H. Bobbitt " " "		
1852-1853	Lingurn S. Burkhead " " "		

1854	Oran Scoville, Plymouth, Washington District
1855	Abram Weaver, " " "
1856	J.L. Fisher, " " "
1857-1858	Thomas W. Guthrie, " " "
1859	James E. Mann, " " "
1860	John W. Jenkins, " " "
1861	Joseph Wheeler, " " "
* 1862	Benjamin F. Guthrie, " " "
1863-1865	Left to be supplied " " "
1866	(No appointments listed)
1867-1868	W.F. Clegg, " " "
1869	Left to be supplied, Plymouth and Columbia, Washington District
1870-1871	John F. Heitman, Plymouth, Washington District
1872-1873	F.D. Swindell, " " "
1874	F.D. Swindell, Plymouth and Jamesville, Washington District
- 1875-1876	W.S. Roan, " " " " "
1877-1878	S.M. Davis, " " " " "
1879	W.B. Doub, Plymouth, " "
1880	S.M. Davis, " " "
1881	Matthew H. Moore, Plymouth Station, " "
1882	W.L. Grissom, Plymouth, " "
1883	W.H. Watkins, " " "
1884	F.A. Bishop, " " "
1885-1886	William R. Ware, " " "
1887-1888	Frank M. Shamburger, Plymouth Station, " "
1889-1891	C.W. Robinson, " " " "

1892	W.B. Moore, Plymouth Station , Washington District
1893	W.H. Willis, Plymouth Station, Washington District
1894	Julian L. Rumley, Plymouth Station, Washington District
1895	Julian L. Rumley, Plymouth Station, Elizabeth City District
1896-1897	Jesse L. Cuninggim, " " " "
* * 1898	Jesse L. Cuninggim, Plymouth, " " "
1899	M.T. Phylor and J. L. Cuninggim, " " "
1900	Julian L. Rumley, Plymouth, Elizabeth City District
1901-1902	Supplied by James H. Buffalo, " " " "
1903	William H. Brown, Plymouth, Elizabeth City District
1904	Supplied by L.B. Jones " " " "
1905-1906	Benson H. Black " " " "
1907-1908	L.T. Singleton, " " " "
1909	Junius A. Martin, " " " "
1910	Marvin Y. Self, " " " "
* * * 1911	H.M. Jackson, Plymouth Station " " "
1912	W.J. Watson, " " " "
1913-1914	W. J. Watson, Plymouth, " " "
1915-1917	B.T. Hurley, " " " "
1917-1919	E.N. Harrison, " " " "
1919-1920	D.C. Earnhardt, " " " "
1920-1922	Walter C. Benson, Plymouth, " " "
* * * * 1922-1926	W.G. Lowe, Plymouth, Elizabeth City District
1926-1931	R.G.L. Edwards, " " " "
1931-1933	J.W. Harrell, " " " "
1933-1934	R.R. Grant " " " "
1934-1935	K.F. Duval, " " " "

1935-1938	Charles T. Thrift, Plymouth, Elizabeth City District				
1938-1939	Wade Johnson,	"	"	"	"
* * * * * 1939-1943	O.L. Hardwick,	"	"	"	"
1943-1946	T.R. Jenkins,	"	"	"	"
1946-1949	J.O. Long,	"	"	"	"
1949-1954	Dwight L. Fouts,	"	"	"	"
1954-1958	Jesse Lanning,	"	"	"	"
1958-1962	A.D. Bryd, Jr.	"	"	"	"
1962-1969	Carl Barbee,	"	"	"	"
1969-1973	J. Claude Chaffin,	"	"	"	"
1973-	Julian W. Scott,	"	"	"	"

* Died in 1862

* * Two societies in the charge now and subsequent years.

* * * Four societies in the charge now and subsequent years, including
Plymouth, Jamesville, Siloam, and Ware's Chapel

* * * * First pastor to serve four years consecutively.

* * * * * In 1940, Jamesville and Siloam removed from charge.