

Rehoboth United Methodist Church

Northampton County

1798-1975



Robert M. Blackburn, D.D., Bishop
Raleigh, North Carolina

Rev. John M. Cline District Superintendent
Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Dr. John E. Wood, Minister
Jackson, North Carolina



Old Rehoboth Church before the porch and entranceway were added to the building which replaced the original church which stood from 1798 until part of the building was erected in 1857 with remodeling in 1908 and the annex added in 1937.



Old Communion Set is shown at open house, with the Rev. Charles Eakin holding plate, Clyde Draper the pitcher, Nannie Lee Spivey the chalice and John Boone the carrying box. The set was used for many years before individual communion sets were acquired. It is by Rogers 1891 silversmiths.

History of Rehoboth United

Methodist Church

1798-1975

The history of Rehoboth Church since 1798 has been of no great outstanding events as the world regards history, but a steady growing power for good in the community. The Church of God does not seek to write its history in glowing events, but in the lives of those who make up its membership and constituency. Rehoboth Church has served and is still serving a real need in the life of the community. It has brought solace and comfort to bereaved hearts. It has laid its hands on the hearts of boys and girls and guided their lives to mature manhood and womanhood and sent them out into the great unknown realms of eternity unafraid. Its membership today is made up of strong stalwart Christian men and women.

In tracing the history of early Methodist Churches, especially those founded during the lifetime of Bishop Asbury and under his episcopal supervision, it is interesting to note that most of these Churches grew up around the life and labors of some local preacher in whose home Asbury was a regular visitor. Often the Church began many years before a site was secured and a meetinghouse erected with the services being held in the home of the local preacher. Such was the beginning of Rehoboth Methodist Church.

In the year 1744 a man by the name of Richard Whitaker, of Halifax County, purchased land and moved to Northampton County with his wife and two sons, John and Richard, Jr. The young Richard Whitaker later became a local preacher and was the founder of Rehoboth Church. Asbury records in his Journal that on March 4, 1804, he ordained Richard Whitaker a deacon in Rehoboth Church. On December 4, 1796, Asbury makes the following record in his Journals: "I rode to see Richard Whitaker and his wife after several years absence. I felt truly solemn when I found myself in the old house where the mother and father died. I remember well what passed when I was here last — the distress of the doctor and his kindness to me in the year 1785." From this entry we draw the conclusion that the older Richard Whitaker was a doctor and that he attended Asbury in his illness in 1785. From the fact that Richard Whitaker, Jr., was a local preacher, his home and also his father's home a stopping place and a preaching place for Asbury as early as 1785; we feel that we are justified in assuming that Rehoboth Church had its beginning in the Whitaker home at least as early 1785. This assumption is further established by the fact that when the deed was made in 1798 Richard Whitaker's name appears first in the list of trustees. So we believe that Richard Whitaker inspired our forefathers to organize a Church and build a meetinghouse where they and their children, and their children's children could meet and worship the Living God.

The one acre of land on which the building was to be erected was purchased by Eliphas Lewis for the sum of one pound sterling. This parcel of land was situated in Northampton County, on the road leading from the village of Rehoboth to Boone's Cross Roads. This land was deeded to the trustees of Rehoboth Church on August 28, 1798. The first trustees were: Richard Whitaker, William Brewer, Absalom Grant, William Grant, and Matthew Griffin. The said land was to be held "in trust by them and their successors in office, and that they shall erect or cause to be erected thereon a house or place of worship for the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the

United States of America, according to the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon and adopted by the said Church at their General Conference in the United States of America.”

Rehoboth Chapel building was a mere box structure, without ceiling, plaster, or paint. The benches were low, long, and without backs. The preacher stood in a box pulpit. This building, though rude in construction, was very dear to the hearts of our forefathers.

Our church was first known as Rehoboth Chapel, then Rehoboth Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1939 the name was changed to Rehoboth Methodist Church. In 1965 the church became Rehoboth United Methodist Church.

Bishop Asbury, in his Journal, records four visits to Rehoboth Chapel. The first was made March 4, 1799. He says: “The generally excessive rains having made the Roanoke impassable at the nearest ferry, we had to ride a circuitous route through Halifax which made it about thirty miles to Richard Whitaker’s in Northampton. We had a bad swamp to cross, but I kept out of the water. It was well for me that my carriage did not upset in the water, which it was very near doing. To travel thirty miles on such a cold day without fire and no food except a bit of biscuit is serious. We were received gladly by our waiting brethren, Whatcoat, Wanner, Lambeth. I am of the opinion that we have left five hundreds miles on the other side of the Roanoke in all the ground we have rode over from Charleston in South to Halifax in North Carolina. I went to Rehoboth (a new meeting-house) and preached on 2nd Cor. 2:14.”

On Monday, February 16, 1801, Bishop Asbury made his second visit to Rehoboth. He said of this trip: “We were under the necessity of moving to Northampton. It was very warm. We started and crossed the Roanoke at Pollock’s Ferry and arrived at Richard Whitakers — twenty miles. I was taken ill with a billious infection. I had a high fever and my head and back furnished symptoms of a lowland intermittent. I could not eat, and thought of staying in the house. I changed my mind and went to Rehoboth Chapel. I read letters giving the accounts of the work of God in the State of Delaware and in Cumberland. At Brother Grant’s, I took a little water gruel and rode on eight miles farther, making twelve miles this day.”

Asbury’s third visit to Rehoboth was made on Monday, January 8, 1802. He says: “We crossed Roanoke at Pollock’s Ferry and came to Richard Whitakers. We had no appointment at Rehoboth, but on Tuesday we called a meeting. N. Snethen spoke on Phillippians 2:5. I followed from Matthew 5:8.

“At Anthony Moore’s we called a meeting, where each of us delivered our testimony, and then we rode to Mr. People’s, here the Presiding Elder had made an appointment by including it with others, but of this there was no notice given except by our coming into the neighborhood the evening before. We would not neglect our duty, but at Malone’s, we faithfully, according to the grace and time given discharged our task and rode on.”

His fourth visit was made on Saturday and Sunday, March 3rd and 4th, 1804. He says: “I rode twenty miles, crossed Roanoke to Bridges Creek and lodged at Richard Whitaker’s. Sunday, March the 4th, was extremely cold. I preached at Rehoboth Chapel and ordained Richard Whitaker a deacon. We had many more people than expected — the house was nearly filled with both colors.”

We know very little about the early leaders and pastors of the Church from 1798 to 1857. But we know they must have been men and women of strong Christian character. They must have laboured at great odds during those early days. We are sure their labours were not in vain, because by 1857 the membership had grown and prospered until the need of a new building was felt. Consequently, the old building was torn down and the present one was erected on the same site. In this building was a gallery where the colored people could sit and join in the worship of God. This building served the congregation until 1908, when it was remodeled. The gallery was torn out and other improvements made under the pastorate of Rev. J. C. Humble. This

building stood as it was remodelled until the spring of 1934, when under the ministry of Rev. E. C. Maness, an educational annex was begun. This was completed in 1937 under the ministry of Rev. Ivey T. Poole. In the construction of these classrooms a splendid spirit of cooperation was shown. Practically all of the work was done by the people of the community. Most all of the lumber was donated by members of the Church. Mr. W. A. Boone was chairman of the Building Committee. These classrooms enabled the Church to enlarge its program of work, and as a result there was an increased attendance and interest upon the part of the people of the community.

Northampton County was a part of one of the first circuits formed in North Carolina — the Roanoke Circuit — formed in 1780 and embracing all the territory north of Roanoke River and Albermarle Sound.

Northampton Circuit until 1880 embraced all the Methodist Churches of the county, and until 1889 was a part of the Virginia Conference. In the early days the pastors who served the Charge rode on horseback from community to community, stopping at the home of some member when night overtook him.

Class meetings were held when there was no preaching. These meetings were in the form of experience meetings. Some of the early Class Leaders of Rehoboth were: Shadrach Grant, Jesse Boone, Edmonds Jacobs, Jason Williams, Joe Spivey, Henry Spivey, Henry Boyce, Johnnie Sykes and Lemuel Boyce.

In 1867 Rehoboth Church was honoured with a visit from Bishop G. F. Pierce. He preached out of doors under the oaks.

A District Conference was held here in 1878, with Rev. J. W. Christian as Presiding Elder.

On May 10, 1877, W. H. Williams and wife, Cornelia Williams, deeded to the trustees of Rehoboth Church one-half acre of land, joining the Church property, to be used for a cemetery. The trustees at this time were as follows: Josiah Spivey, Henry Spivey, Ira B. Sykes, Lemuel Boyce, William H. Williams and William Grant. Among the many people buried in the Church cemetery are two Methodist preachers: Rev. William Grant and Rev. B. F. Tennille.

On August 7, 1938, Rehoboth Church celebrated its 140th anniversary with over 700 members and friends in attendance.

We have no record as to when our Sunday Church School began. The late Mr. Pete Spivey tells of the first Sunday School he remembers. "The pupils used blue back spelling books. Catechisms were studied. Those people who could read studied the Bible. Prizes were given for the most scripture memorized". Superintendents who have served our school since 1880 are: W. E. Woodruff, Adbeal Grant, H. H. Grant, T. P. Grant, Herod Duke, J. M. Tennille, W. W. Draper, B. F. Tennille, and John E. Boone (1923-1965); C. Horace Lassiter, Assistant, (1958-1960); Odell Barnes, Kelly W. Edwards, and Gurney W. Braswell.

Mr. John E. Boone served as superintendent over forty (40) years. At the time he was elected, they were having financial difficulty. The collection was less than 50 cents each Sunday. Through his determined leadership, the church survived.

In 1970 the loving hands of church members of the Rehoboth Methodist Church that was first built in 1857 added to and restored the church for only the cost of \$6 for a building permit. Mrs. John Boone credits the leadership of the project to the Rev. Charles Eakin who came to the Northampton Charge that year. His hobby is woodworking and she believes the church got 100 per cent behind the restoration under his inspiration.

The project included a new entrance hall and an entranceway and refinishing of the entire interior of the church proper. All of the work was done voluntarily by

members and donations covered the expenses, some of them anonymous.

The ladies took all of the pews and movable wooden furniture outside, applied lye to remove the many coats of old paint and then refinished them. In some cases, such as the pulpit chairs, the wood was found to be beautiful black walnut. In addition, the upholstery was remade. The pulpit stand is entirely handmade.

At first there was a discussion about updating the interior but the members finally agreed to retain the original round plan at the pulpit.

It took almost a year for the entire project but most of the refinishing was done in the last three months with Joe Drake serving as chairman of the trustees.

The Rev. Eakin served Jackson and New Hope Methodist Churches, as well as Rehoboth. He came to the area from the Burlington district.

The members and guests celebrated the completion of the task which came in the 172nd year of the church with an afternoon open house followed by a picnic.

District Superintendent the Rev. Paul Carruth of Rocky Mount gave an inspirational talk at the evening services following the open house.

The highlight of the day was the recovery of what was thought to be a "lost" communion set. It was discovered shortly before the day of the services that Mrs. Howard Futrell and her brother Clyde Draper had been given the set by their father Winfred Draper who had received it from Adbel Grant. The set was used for an unknown number of years before the church started to use individual communion sets in 1923.

It would be interesting if we had a list of all those who have been members of Rehoboth Church during the 177 years of its history, for doubtless among this list would be recorded the names of many great men and women. We have been able to secure the list of the pastors of the Church since 1863.

Edward P. Wilson	1863-1866	T. H. Sutton	1902-1906
Thos. L. Williams	1866-1868	J. C. Humble	1906-1908
Joseph Leah	1868-1869	W. B. North	1908-1912
C. E. Hobdy	1869-1871	W. E. Hocutt	1912-1917
J. E. McSparran	1871-1872	E. H. Davis	1913-1917
W. E. Allen	1872-1875	J. M. Wright	1917-1921
M. S. Colonna	1875-1877	B. P. Robinson	1921-1925
J. Q. Rose	1877-1878	Daniel Lane	1925-1927
B. F. Tennille	1878-1881	B. C. Thompson	1927-1931
J. H. Bayton	1881-1884	E. C. Maness	1931-1935
J. S. Wallace	1884-1886	Ivey T. Poole	1935-1939
J. O. Moss	1886-1889	W. L. Maness	1939-1943
R. B. Scott	1889-1890	O. L. Hardwick	1943-1947
T. S. Campbell	1890-1891	J. F. Coble	1947-1952
L. J. Holden	1891-1893	W. C. Wilson	1952-1954
G. B. Perry	1893-1895	D. D. Traynham	1954-1960
Z. T. Harrison	1895-1896	Angus Cameron	1960-1966
A. R. Goodchild	1896-1898	H. Everett Jackson	1966-1970
John Jones	1898-1900	Charles F. Eakin	1970-1975
E. E. Rose	1900-1902	John E. Wood	1975-

Rehoboth Church is proud of its sons who have gone forth from its sacred walls to preach the gospel.

William Grant, son of Mr. and Mrs. Shadrach Grant, was born in 1818. He joined the Virginia Conference in 1840. After thirty years of active service he located and did supply work until his death in 1896.

W. E. Grant, son of Rev. and Mrs. William Grant, joined the Virginia Conference in 1880. He was a faithful servant of God until his death in 1937.

R. R. Grant, son of Mr. and Mrs. Adbeal Grant, joined the North Carolina Conference in 1899 at Washington, N. C. He died February 3, 1946.

Joshua J. Boone, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Boone, joined the North Carolina Conference in 1907, at New Bern, N. C. He served the North Carolina Conference until his death

Benjamin F. Boone, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Boone, joined the North Carolina Conference in 1916 at Durham, N. C. He also served the North Carolina Conference until his death

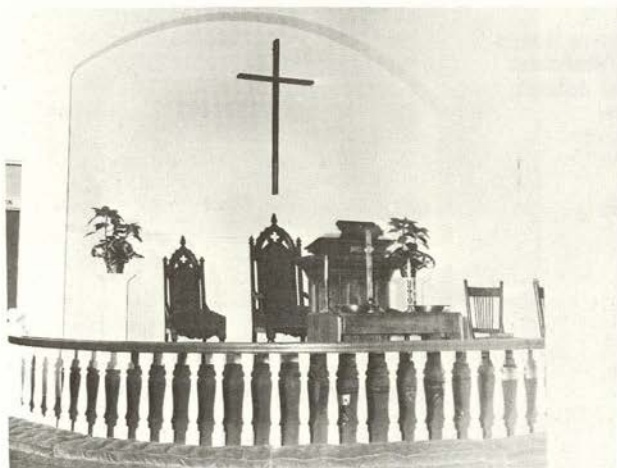
Norman Vaughan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alpheus Vaughan, joined the North Carolina Conference in 1922.

Daniel C. Boone, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Boone was a member of Rehoboth Church until the age of 15, when his family moved to Virginia. He preached a number of years in Virginia and North Carolina before he joined the North Carolina Conference in 1943. Mr. Boone is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Boone.

Simon Bristowe was a member and leader in Rehoboth Church from his boyhood until 1876, when he became a minister in the Baptist Church.

Mrs. Frances Lowe Fouts, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Atlas Lowe, is the wife of Rev. D. L. Fouts, who is now retired.

Thus Rehoboth Church has stood through the years as a city on a hill, as a lighted candle on a candlestick. Its light has gone forth not only into the community surrounding it, but far out into the world to brighten the lives of many people, and only Eternity will be able to reveal the results of the labors of those faithful souls who have wrought, toiled and worshipped within its sacred walls. May the next 177 years of her history be filled with as much good as the 177 years which have passed forever into eternity.



Restored according to the original plan is the pulpit area, all of the furniture and upholstery, with the work being done by the church members. The pulpit stand is entirely handmade and the chairs were found to be of beautiful black walnut. The round style was preserved in the pulpit area.

Officers of Rehoboth United Methodist Church

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