The Heritage of Shady Grove United Methodist Church

A deed considering land within the vicinity of the "old" Shady Grove(s) and using a "meeting house path" as a point of reference was acknowledged by the court in October, 1765. When or if that "meeting house" actually became a "preaching house" is unknown. However, Mrs. Mamie Alston, the oldest living member of Shady Grove (she turned 100 in March, 1995), reported that on Francis Asbury's first visit to North Carolina in 1780 he stopped at Joseph John Williams' home near Arcola and from this meeting the first Shady Grove class meeting was formed. They met originally about one and a half miles east of the current location, on Rabbit Bottom Road in what was known as the "old ice house." Mr. Edgar Thorne, current resident of Cherry Hill and local-interest historian, tells that an oral tradition passed on to him by George W. Davis (1901-1982) understood that the next Methodist preaching house was established on the property across from the current Buxton Place, which is located about 2 miles south of this present location on Hwy. 58. It is believed that this meeting house burned so the most recent "old Shady Grove" meeting house was constructed while the members continued to meet under a brush arbor at Buxton Place.

Exactly when these "Methodists" began meeting in the building that became known as "Shady Grove Methodist Church" is also something that remains unknown. But it was certainly by 1818, for in that year the land on which the Shady Grove meeting house stood was deeded to the Methodist Episcopal Church by Samuel Williams. John A. Williams, his father, had built the house and is affectionately known as the "founder" of Shady Grove. His home still stands adjacent to the old Shady Grove Church property. This newly formed "church" continued to meet at that location until 1927; the location was approximately one-and-a-half mile north on the Baltimore Road and about a quarter mile west on the Lickskillet Road from here. In 1927, the members desired to build a "real" Church and moved to this present location. The old meeting house became a store and burned in 1990.

Much of the timber that was used to construct the building came from a church in Wood, NC, which in 1927 saw its congregation merge with another. This is that same structure. In 1989 the Church added indoor plumbing and its bathroom. In 1994, the current central heating and air system was installed and just last month, April 1995, lexan was placed over the windows to preserve and further insulate the windows.

Concerning the charge, in 1883 the Warren Circuit was divided in half and the Shady Grove Church was made a part of the South Warren Circuit which consisted of seven churches: Shocco, Sarepta, Cokesbury, Bethlehem, Prospect, Shady Grove, and Providence. A parsonage was built in Warrenton. In 1958 the Circuit was divided at the direction of the North Carolina Conference to create circuits small enough that every church might have a service on every Sunday. Accordingly, the circuit was divided to place Bethlehem and Shady Grove together on its present charge. The parsonage was completed in 1960 and the pastor still resides here across from the Shady Grove Church.

Though there are not distinct records dating back to its earliest historical origins, it is known that Francis Asbury traveled greatly through this area and probably stayed in the homes of persons who were associated with Shady Grove. The most clear reference to this occurs during Asbury's last journey before his death. Hoping to make it from South Carolina to Virginia in time for their Annual Conference, he stopped off at the home of Major William Williams. His health failing, he stayed in this home for nearly a month (February-March, 1816), trying to regain his strength. The Williams

(over)

(cont.)

Methodist Heritage Tour, May 6, 1995,
Inez, North Carolina; Joyner Leader

family still resides on the same property and have remained members of The Shady Grove United Methodist Church to this day (these include Edgar Thorne, Elizabeth Johnson, Mamie Alston and Mary Agnes Dillard).

Currently, we would like to note that the Reverend H. Charles Davis, North Carolina missionary to Armenia, grew up in and around the Shady Grove Church. Many of his relatives are members here. Upon his appointment beyond the conference, Shady Grove determined to be a part of his ministry. Last year, 1994, Shady Grove UMC was one of the Raleigh District's top five churches in giving to the Advance Specials.

Though this Church and life in general around Inez may seem dated, we have great hopes for the future, knowing that God has blessed us richly with a heritage that speaks of God's goodness and mercy and God will surely keep guiding us as we creatively pursue the vision God has given us. We hope to make "church" a genuine experience of God's grace and love. As an example, just two weeks ago, three youth were confirmed out of a blossoming group of six, and 64 persons were in attendance. We were very proud, as this increased our membership to 62. Additionally, we have a very active United Methodist Women's group and hope to begin a United Methodist Youth Fellowship in the near future.

Appointments Made to Shady Grove

1863	Lenmom Shell	1919	Jesse Draper
1865	T. B. Kingsbury	1923	William Towe
1866	J. B. Moore	1927	S. E. Wright
1870	R. A. Willis	1932	E. N. Harrison
1874	S. V. Hoyle	1934	L. C. Brothers
1876	J. R. Griffith	1938	E. R. Shuller
1880	W. C. Gannon	1941	N. W. Grant
1881	J. R. Griffith	1945	F. B. Brandenburg
1883	J. W. Holden	1950	W. M. Wells
1886	W. B. North	1953	W. O. Connor
1889	John W. Jenkins	1957	Meryl Amspacker
1889	B. B. Culbreath	1960	John Wood
1892	C. O. Durant	1961	W. D. Sabiston
1894	T. J. Dailey	1964	Wayne Wingfield
1897	John Sanford	1966	James Henry Coile
1899	J. M. Rice	1970	William M. Haas
1901	R. B. Clark	1973	Ralph Waters
1902	S. T. Moyle	1976	John Peacock
1903	L. M. Chaffin	1977	John M. Bowman
1904	B. C. Allred	1982	Charles Cooper
1908	B. C. Thompson	1985	B. Wayne Ebert
1912	Robert W. Bailey	1989	Kevin Morris
1916	M. Y. Self	1991	Timm Hackett
1917	C. B. Jones	1993	W. Clint Black