



***Smith United Methodist Church***

*1215 Smith Church Road  
Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina*

Church: (252)537-5389  
Parsonage: (252)537-1343



*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
Psalm 91:1*



# History of Smith's Methodist Church 1791-1949

Written in July 1949

By: Mrs. Wavley W. Pearson  
And  
Mrs. J. Sam Powell

The history of Smith's Methodist Church since 1791 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.

Smith's Church has served and still is 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 great unknown realms of eternity unafraid. Its membership today is made up of strong, stalwart, Christian men, women and children.

In tracing the history of early Methodist churches, it is interesting to note that most of these churches grew up around the life and labors of some local preacher who was visited regularly by Bishop Asbury, the Episcopal Supervisor. Often the church began many years before a site was secured and a meeting house erected, with the services held in the home of the local preacher. Such was the beginning of Smith's Methodist Church.

Some few years before 1791 many from this community would gather at the little brush arbor where our church is now located and worship. In the year 1791 there was a deed made between William Smith on the one part and the Bishops, Elders, Deacons, and Preachers of the Methodist churches in America on the other part, stating that "The said William Smith for and in consideration of five pounds current money (approximately \$25.00) sold one dividend or parcel of land amounting to one acre, more or less." The deed was signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of witnesses William Smith, Wormly Rose, William Rose and Miles Smith on Halifax Court Street, May Session, 1791. Then this deed was exhibited in open court duly approved by the oath of William Smith and William Rose, two of the subscribing witnesses there, on motion to be registered. Then, it was registered in Book 17, Page 303 in the Register of Deeds Office of Halifax Courthouse by P. N. Long, P. R., on the thirteenth day of October in the year 1791.

There has been little information secured on how and when the church building was erected but some of the oldest members said that it must have been erected about the 1797 and so named for William Smith from who the land was purchased.

Our church was first known as Smith's Chapel. Early churches were called Chapels because John Wesley did not intend to found a separate church from the Episcopal.

The earliest description available of our church was mere plastered box structure with two doors leading into two aisles where comfortable benches were convenient on either side. The pulpit had steps on each side with a tall center. In the building over the entrance a large gallery was built for the Colored people to sit and join in the worship of God with the white people. At the close of the Civil War in 1893 a confederate soldier, G. A. Green, weary from a long walk on a rainy night, stopped and secured rest and shelter for the rest of the night, arising and continuing his journey home the next morning.

We know very little about the early leaders and pastors of the church from 1797 until 1887 but we know they must have been men and women of strong Christian character. They must have labored at great odds during those early days.

Class meetings were held when there were no preachers. These meetings were in the form of experience and prayer meetings. We have no records as to when our Sunday Church School began. Mr. William Clements Allsbrook tells of his earliest days in Smith's Church around Sixty years ago. According to this memory, Mr. George Medlin was among the first Sunday School Superintendents and then Mr. A. M. Inge was for many years. Mr. Medlin had very little education but he was a great leader in the church worship. His wife, Miss Ginnie, as she was known by so many, had a fairly good education and would read the Sunday school lesson to him and he in turn made a great teacher and leader through memory of the message she read to him. He was steward Leader, Choir Leader, and Prayer Leader, conducting many prayer services. Mrs. Medlin was the first woman Mr. Allsbrook remembers hearing pray. Preachers were fewer than of today and quite often the Laymen held the revival services instead of preachers.

As far back as memory can trace the revival services have begun with an all day service, giving the morning hours to the children for their Children's Day Program and then introducing the visiting preacher, after which dinner was spread on tables in the shade where old friends might meet old friends and enjoy the great variety of foods that everyone added extra from their basket lunch.

In the year 1895 a church was recommended by the Roanoke circuit for Roanoke Rapids. This is a branch of Smith's Church.

On December 18, 1916, Mrs. Agnes Cheek deeded to Smith's Methodist Church one acre of land joining the church ground. This was for the enlargement of the church cemetery. The trustees at his time were George W. Fulghum, J. T. Allen and Lafayette Powell.

The oldest tombstone in the church cemetery is that of Richard Bishop Parker 1817-1869, and of his wife Sarah Ann Priscilla Sledge Parker 1822-1885.



We are sure that the labors of the earliest church leaders were not in vain, because by 1919 the membership had grown and prospered until the need of a larger building was felt. Consequently as the road was being changed and coming closer to the church the members decided it should be moved and enlarged.

One of Gods' faithful servants, J. E. Pearson, better known as Jim Pearson, took a pair of his mules and a group of willing helpers and moved the church approximately thirty feet Northwest from where it stood. Then the church was remodeled by adding two large classrooms on each side and changing the entrance from two doors into one large double-door entrance, with a tall bell-tower at the front. The remodeling was financed through a loan from the Weldon Bank and Trust Company, and transferred to the Board of Church Extension Service. At that time the trustees listed were J. T. Allen, Bill Boseman and George Fulghum and Lafayette Powell. The members in turn worked faithfully and successfully to pay back the loan. The remodeling and addition of four classrooms enabled the church to enlarge its program of work, as a result there was an increased attendance and interest upon the part of the people of the community.

Sometime in the summer of 1878 Rev. R. O. Burton, one of our Godly Missionary minded preachers of that day, was in Baltimore and heard there of the new woman's Missionary Society which had recently been authorized by the General Conference. He was so impressed with the importance and the far reaching possibilities of this movement, that immediately upon his return to his home near Weldon he organized a woman's Missionary Society at our church, of which Mrs. Burton was a member. The society consisted of three members, Mrs. Burton, Mrs. George Medlin and Mrs. A. M. Inge, later a society was organized at Weldon until the year 1905. We have no record of it from that date until the year 1927 when a Missionary Society was organized under the leadership of Mrs. H. C. Spiers and worked for a short while, but soon faded away. The Ladies Sunday School Class, under the leadership of their teacher, Mrs. J. E. Pearson with her approximately seventeen members, organized a Society known as the Willing Workers in 1932 and worked under these conditions around five years. Among their greatest work was their special care and assistance to an orphan at the Raleigh Orphanage. They did many great works and under the leadership of Mrs. C. T. Rogers, the Willing Workers organization was changed over into the Missionary Society in 1937, later being known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service. At this time much progress has been made in the growth and affects of the Society. Mrs. J. I. Boseman is its present great leader.

Under the leadership of Rev. E. N. Garrison during the years 1922-1924 a baby roll was started and he encouraged parents to give their infants by Baptism to God. He suited his sermons to children's minds and hearts. He conducted prayer meetings to kindle a desire for a revival with power to save the community.

The first record in our church of Infant Baptism is that of Annie Louise Williams in January 1895 by the Rev. W. S. Black.



There was an agreement made on February 2, 1937 between the Stewards of Smith's Church – J. I. Boseman, Raymond Garner, Archie L. Garner, T. B. Turner, C. W. Cooke, Lillian P. Smallwood, J. Edward Allen, John Wesley Fulghum Sr., Dora P. Hawkins and J. Sam Powell – and the Virginia Electric and Power Company for the Company to pull wire by and put a pole in the church yard. From this our church receives electric current. The poles used in the church yard and near by were given by W. J. Smith of Gatesville, father of Mrs. J. W. Fulghum. The Pastor, Reverend D. M. Sharpe, and a group of the church members went to Gatesville and cut the poles and hired a truck to bring them the following day.

During Rev. J. J. Boone's ministry here from 1933-1937 much progress was made for better Christianity in our church and community. Under his leadership a Young People's Division was organized, Mrs. Dora P. Hawkins was chosen as leader for this group of young people. At this time J. W. Fulghum is Superintendent of this division which has had the name changed to the Methodist Youth Fellowship in the past few years.

Mr. Boone also conducted the First Vacation Bible School that records show for Smith's church.

Since 1919, E. R. Hawkins, A. L. Garner, J. I. Boseman and Raymond Garner, Wavley Pearson have served as Sunday School Superintendents.

It would be interesting if we had a list of all those who have been members of Smith's church during the one hundred and fifty years of its history, for doubtless among the list would be recorded the names of many great men and women. We have been able to secure the list of Pastors since 1887 and many of the Presiding Elders. The exact years in several cases are in question, but most cases the years are correct. (Attached)

The preachers listed have been great leaders of our church and have touched the hearts of many. They have had salary changes from time to time. (Attached through current)

It is quite interesting to know that our assessment for the minister's salary in 1892 was \$140.00; in 1903 it was only \$125.00 while by the year of 1949 it has slowly increased until now it is \$825.00.

Our present pastor is Rev. D. A. Petty from Halifax and we are on the Halifax Charge.

Our present stewards are A. L. Marriner, A. L. Garner, C. W. Cooke, J. W. Fulghum, Mrs. Dora P. Hawkins, Raymond Garner, J. E. Allen, J. S. Powell, Mrs. Lillian P. Smallwood, Elmo Faison, Jessie Shell and Wavely Pearson.

The Trustees are A. L. Garner, J. W. Fulghum, B. C. Pearson and E. M. Garner.

The Sunday School Secretary and Treasurer is E. M. Garner.

The Church Secretary and Treasurer is J. E. Allen.

The Sunday School Superintendent is Wavely Pearson.

With our present 209 members on the Church School rolls we have large and good working Sunday School Classes with teachers as follows:

Beginner's Class	Mrs. Wavely Pearson
Primary Class	Miss Gertrude Powell
Junior Class	Mrs. J. W. Fulghum
Intermediate Class	Mrs. Lillian Smallwood
Young Ladies Class	Mrs. A. L. Garner
Young Married Women's Class	Mr. J. I. Boseman
Adult Ladies Class	Mrs. Sam Powell
Adult Men Class	Mr. J. W. Fulghum
Young Men's Class	Mr. A. L. Garner

With this present group and a gradual membership increase there has been a great need for additional room. By 1947 plans were practically completed and work begun under the leadership of our Pastor, Rev. D. A. Petty, for much additional room. Much free labor has been rendered by its members along with the work of the hired contractor being paid through donations from its members and friends. An addition on the back as large as the former building has been completed enough so that we might gather together and worship God. A group of men gathered at the church on Thursday night, June 30, 1949, and moved the classroom materials and auditorium materials into the new part giving the builders a section ready for repair. We had our first worship service in the new section on July 3, 1949 which included both Sunday School Service and Preaching. The following Sunday, July 10 our revival began with an all day service with a sermon by Rev. W. M. Howards, Jr. from Bethel at eleven in the morning following by a feast spread from basket lunches of a great variety of food furnished by all who gathered. The afternoon service, also conducted by Rev. Howard, was a great inspiration for a successful revival meeting.

The class rooms have been removed from each side of the old building. We now have a nice new brick building with beautiful stained glass windows which were given as memorials. The auditorium which is being remodeled and repaired is almost completed and we are looking forward to being able to have our worship services in it in the very near future.

Mrs. Sam Powell is Secretary and Treasurer of the Finance Committee and Rev. D. A. Petty is Chairman of the Building Committee. The funds are being generously raised through donations and pledges of our members and friends from far and near. The Duke Endowment is giving us \$3500.00.

The Corner Stone was purchased in the year 1949, but was not laid until April 1950.



Thus Smith's 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.

***History and Heritage matters.....to revisit events and people lets us know our past and look to the future. The following was written by Mrs. Wavley Pearson and Mrs. J. Sam Powell in July of 1949. We remember these individuals with love, and with gratitude for their devotion to the service of God and Smith United Methodist Church.***

*Thank you to all that shared information to make this directory possible.*

*June 2006*

## Events in the History of Smith United Methodist Church

- Before 1791      Community members met at a brush (bush) arbor near where the present church is located.
- 1791              A deed was issued by William Smith "in consideration of 5 pounds current money" (approximately \$25 in today's currency). It was registered in the Register of Deeds Office in Halifax on October 13.
- Around 1797      A church building had been erected and named Smith's Chapel.
- 1865?             A story says that a Confederate soldier walking home from the battlefield stopped and secured shelter and rest in the church.
- 1878              A Women's Missionary Society was organized by the Rev. R. O. Burton in Weldon and Smith's women later joined with that group.
- 1889?             A Sunday Church School was begun with Mr. George Medlin as the first superintendent.
- 1895              Smith Church helped to establish First Methodist Church in Roanoke Rapids. Annie Louis Williams was the first infant baptized in the church.
- 1916              On December 18, an acre of land adjacent to the church was deeded to Smith Church by Agnes Cheek.
- 1919              Because of the re-routing of Smith Church Road, the church building was turned around and moved to its present location. Two classrooms and a bell tower were added.
- 1922              A "Baby Roll" was started. Infant baptism was encouraged.
- 1927              The Women's Missionary Society was reorganized but soon disbanded.
- 1932              A willing Workers Society with members from the ladies Sunday School Class was organized.
- 1937              The WWS became the Women's Society of Christian Service. Electric lights were installed using poles donated by Mr. W. J. Smith of Gatesville, father of Mrs. J. W. Fulghum. A Young People's Division was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Dora P. Hawkins. Around this time, the first Vacation Bible School was held.
- 1947              A two-story classroom building with kitchen and fellowship room was added.
- 1948              Smith Church and New Hope Church were instrumental in the



establishment of South Rosemary Methodist Church.

- 1949 A church remodeling program began. Two classrooms were removed, brick veneer was added; and stained glass windows were installed. A cornerstone for the building was purchased.
- 1950 The cornerstone for the renovated church was laid in a special ceremony.
- 1956 Smith Church became a station church. (Had previously been on the Roanoke Charge and then Halifax Charge).
- 1957 A parsonage was built across Smith Church Road facing the church on land donated by the W. H. Shell family.
- 1971 The parsonage was remodeled.
- 1979 Ground was broken for the new fellowship hall.
- 1986 The refurbishing of the sanctuary began. The congregation held services in the fellowship hall while the work was done.
- 1987 Additions and improvements to the parsonage were done.
- 1991 A year-long bicentennial celebration was carried out with many special activities. An Allen Organ was installed and dedicated. (Gift from Fulghum family)
- 1992 A children's classroom wing was added.
- 1996 Smith Church held its first celebration of "Heritage Sunday" on April 28<sup>th</sup>.
- 1998 The church was vandalized and the Fellowship Hall was set on fire. Refurbishment of the Fellowship Hall followed.
- January 2002 9.7 acres adjacent to the church was purchased for \$70,000.00. A loan from Branch Banking and Trust was secured.
- 2002 The home located on the newly purchased property known as the "Flowers" home was moved.
- December 2002 The note obtained from Branch Banking & Trust was paid in full. During the year Smith United Methodist Church was blessed with 3 bequeaths from Miss Susie Pearson, Miss Clyde Fulghum, and Snook Garner.
- February 2003 A Study Committee was formed to seek ideas and ways in which the church needed to expand and grow.

- June 2003            An architect was hired.
- 2005-2006            With the ideas submitted by the architect, it was decided to move forward with paving the parking lot. A "Men's Club Building" for future stews and church activities is built where the former "Flowers" home was located. Much of the work is done by the Men's Club.
- May 2006            The parking lot is no longer a vision, but a realization and the "Men's Club" Activity Center nears completion.

*"Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord." Psalms 102:18*



## PASTORS WHO SERVED OUR CHURCH

*"Well done thou good and faithful servant" .....Matthew 25:21*

1887-1889	Rev. T. B. Rooks	1941-1944	Rev. W. F. Walters
1889-1892	Rev. B.B. Holder	1944-1946	Rev. J. D. Stott
1892-1893	Rev. J.T. Draper	1946-1950	Rev. D.A. Petty
1894-1895	Rev. J. H. Frizelle	1950-1952	Rev. L. C. Brother
1897	Rev. J.A. Harmaday	1952-1956	Rev. M. R. Gardner
1898	Rev. Y. E. Wright	1956-1957	Rev. J. T. Mansfield
1902-1903	Rev. R. B. Clark	1957-1962	Rev. Arnold Pope
1904-1906	Rev. W. B. Humble	1962-1965	Rev. C. K. Wright
1907	Rev. G. B. Webster	1965-1969	Rev. B.E. Bingham
1908	Rev. G. B. Perry	1969-1970	Rev. Carson Tyson
1909-1910	Rev. W.A. Piland	1970-1974	Rev. Roger Elliott
1911-1914	Rev. William Towe	1974-1976	Rev. J. B. Helms, Jr.
	Rev. J.T. Draper	1976-1981	Rev. Don P. Lee
	Rev. W.C. Martin	1981-1983	Rev. Bob Warren
1919-1921	Rev. C. M. Lance	1983-1988	Rev. Johnny Branch
1922-1925	Rev. E. N. Harrison	1988-1996	Rev. Joe Lister
1926-1928	Rev. J. A. Tharpe	1996-1997	Rev. Bill Clements
1929-1930	Rev. C. T. Thrift	1997-2001	Rev. Todd Krueger
1931-1932	Rev. D.M. Sharpe	2001-2004	Rev. Robert "Bobby" Dean
1933-1937	Rev. J.J. Boone	2004-	Rev. Robert "Rob" Shelton
1937-1940	Rev. C. T. Rogers		

*"Therefore, my beloved bretheren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*

~ I Corinthians 15:58



*This picture was printed on the front of the directory that was published when B. E. Bingham was the pastor (1965-1969) of Smith United Methodist Church.*

*William B. Cannon was the bishop and Paul Carruth was superintendent of the Rocky Mount District.*

*Look how much we've grown!*