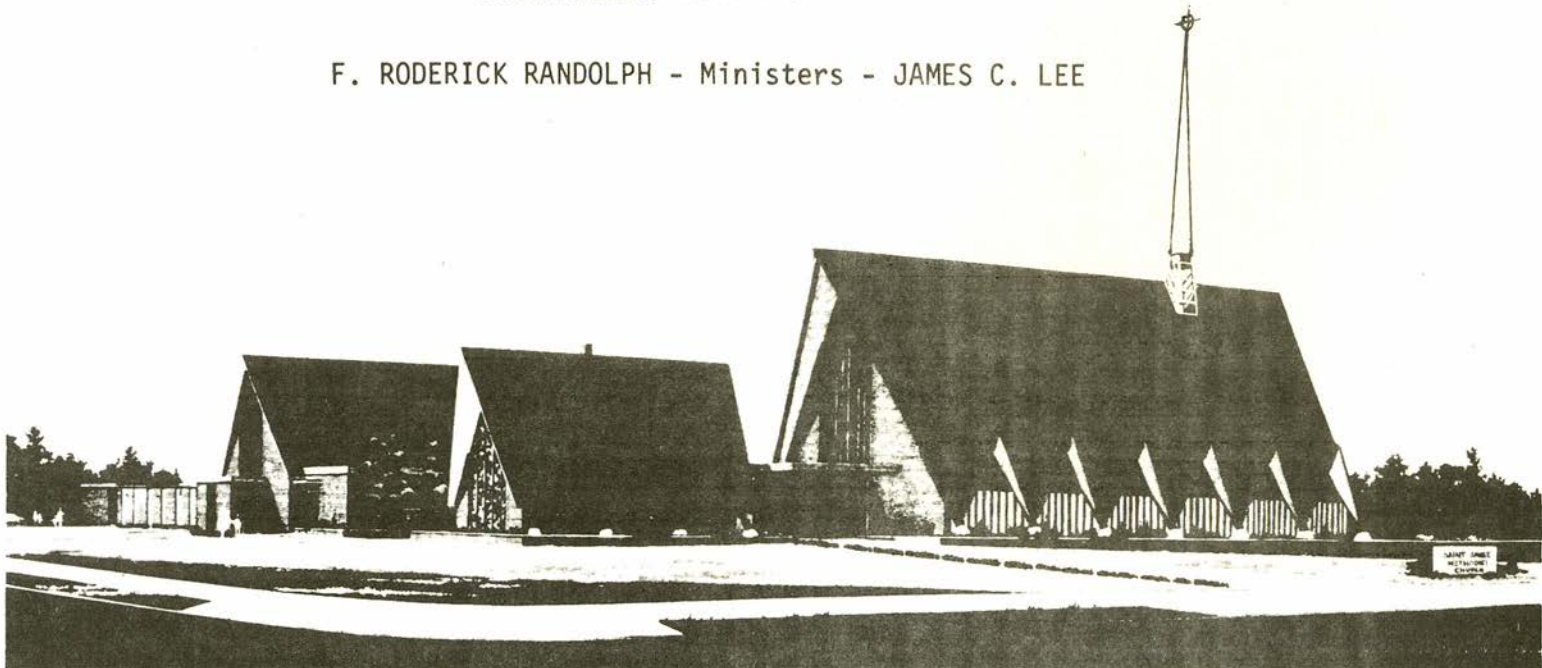


Saint James Church

U N I T E D M E T H O D I S T

FOREST HILLS CIRCLE AT EAST SIXTH STREET
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

F. RODERICK RANDOLPH - Ministers - JAMES C. LEE



HISTORY OF SAINT JAMES METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church has always played an important role in the religious life of Greenville. As the City has grown over the years, the Methodist Church has kept pace. In 1950, Jarvis Memorial Methodist Church had grown into one of the larger Churches in the North Carolina Annual Conference. It was felt that if enough interest in forming a suburban Church was exhibited, Jarvis Church would sponsor and aid this undertaking. A special committee, working under the guidance of Rev. Leon Russell, Pastor of Jarvis Church, reported that the time was appropriate for the venture, and that the effort should be encouraged.

On February 26, 1952, a meeting of interested persons was held at the Rotary Club Building. At this meeting, the decision was made to form a new suburban Methodist Church. Van C. Fleming, Jr. was elected Chairman and Thomas E. Wilson, Secretary to the group.

In May, 1952, Rev. E. L. Earnhardt, Jr. was sent by the Conference to help organize this Church. On May 27, 1952, Mr. Earnhardt met with this group at the home of Van C. Fleming, Jr., at which time it was decided that the new Church should be named Saint James Methodist Church. Mr. Earnhardt and his family moved to Greenville, and a small office was furnished for him over Mr. Tom Wilson's store. Sunday School classes were organized and Church services were regularly held in the Greenville High School building, which has since burned.

It was decided that the new Church should be located somewhere in East Greenville. In July of 1952, the family of James Brown offered to give to the new Church two lots located at the corner of Forest Hills Circle and East Sixth Street, at the same time offering to sell to the Church the remainder of the lots located in the City block bounded by Forest Circle, East Sixth Street, Hilltop Drive and East Seventh Street. The decision was quickly made to accept the offer of the Brown family and Rev. H. K. King, District Superintendent met with the Church July 13, 1952 to formally organize the Church. Seventy-three Church members were received by transfer of membership, and one by profession of faith at this meeting.

It was decided that all members who joined the Church by November 9, 1952 would be Charter Members of Saint James Methodist Church. By this

date, there were 144. At the October, 1952 Annual Conference, Rev. E. L. Earnhardt, Jr. was returned to Saint James Church.

The Board of Church Extension gave the Church \$5,000 which was immediately used to buy adjoining property to the lots already owned, and we were allowed to use Third Street School for our meeting place.

Realizing that it was essential for our Church to have a home of its own, Mr. Howard L. Hodges, Jr. chaired a building committee to formulate plans for the new Church. Mr. Leslie H. Garner served as Chairman of our Building Fund Committee. The membership was very loyal and energetic in participating in many activities with which to raise funds.

In October of 1953, Rev. J. Malloy Owen, III was appointed to Saint James Church. Mr. Bob Gibbons, a Divinity student at Duke University, became choir director.

One of the highlights of 1953 was the first Lovefeast held by Saint James Church, under the direction of W. H. Watson. It was then discontinued until December 1957 and has been annually since. It has proved a most inspirational service.

The Building Committee reported regularly to the Church and several plans were submitted to be considered by the membership. In 1953, a plan was decided on, and an effort made to find the money with which we could insure the completion of the building.

The Commission on Church Extension gave us another gift of \$2,500 in 1953, and together with such monies as had been received to that time, the building fund held \$13,500. Additional land was needed. It was seemingly impossible to borrow enough money to build our building with what we had on hand. Not to be deterred, we decided to sell \$50,000 in Mortgage Bonds, and set about with subscription lists, and within six weeks, the entire amount had been subscribed. Even though the cost of the building considerably exceeded the Bond issue and the money on hand, the membership determined that they had the faith and ability, nevertheless, to build a new Church. Therefore, on January 17, 1954, Bishop N. Garber presided over the Groundbreaking Ceremony on the Church property, which was attended by officials from Jarvis Memorial, interested friends, and the major portion of our Church membership of 255.

In spite of our financial handicap, not one day of delay was experi-

enced because of the Church's failure to have sufficient funds on hand to pay for labor and materials. There were times when the building fund was practically exhausted, but whenever the congregation was informed of this situation, they responded generously to the challenge.

During the Easter season in 1954, Saint James Church sponsored a production of the Passion Play. Dr. J. A. Withey and Dr. Kenneth Cuthbert, of the East Carolina Faculty, and Miss Mamiej Chandler directed the cast and chorus. The play was given at East Carolina College for four nights and played to an audience of thousands. The spiritual rewards of this undertaking were apparent at the Church service on Sunday following the play, when 50 Saint James people rededicated their lives to God through the service of their Church.

On February 27, 1955, our new Church was occupied by the congregation. Rev. H. K. King, District Superintendent presided. This was the first wholly air conditioned Church building in Pitt County. The congregation continued to grow rapidly. In early 1957, it was determined to erect a Sunday School annex, which building would double for use by the Scout organizations and other youth activities of the Church. The ground breaking took place in August of 1957.

In 1958, a parsonage was purchased, located at the corner of Ragsdale Road and Slay Drive; and Mr. James H. Parnell became director of music on June 15, 1958.

In 1959, Rev. Carlton F. Hirschi was appointed Pastor. In the fall of 1961, a Planning Committee, headed by Howard L. Hodges, Jr., was appointed to undertake a long-range development program. Mr. Leslie H. Garner accepted the responsibility of heading a Bond Retirement Committee, and on March 25, 1962, the entire debt of the Church, on its present building, had been fully satisfied. Mr. Edwin Page Shaw assumed duties as director of music on June 1, 1962.

Saint James Methodist Church has been proud of its record of growth and responsibility in the Methodist Church. It became fully self-subsistent within ten months of its organization.

Under the leadership of the Rev. William K. Quick, who was assigned to St. James in 1963, the Church began a remarkable period of growth and expansion in membership, physical plant, and church programs. In the

fall of 1963, the planning committee which had been organized under the Rev. Hirschi, selected Mr. Walter Burgess of Raleigh, North Carolina as architect for the design and planning of the new church facilities. The planning committee was renamed the building committee and worked intensely with Mr. Burgess in the concept and execution of the plans and construction of the new church facilities as designed by Mr. Burgess, approved by the building committee, and the congregation.

By 1964, our congregation was expanding so rapidly that our facilities were crowded to the point that it was necessary to have two church services each Sunday in order to accommodate the congregation. Therefore, it was with much joy that we saw construction begin in 1964 under the general contractor, Mr. Leo Hawkins. The construction was designed to be completed in three phases: First--the new education facility which would occupy space to the rear and east of the old building would be completed and occupied; second--the sanctuary would be constructed, together with the narthex and south entrance, and; third--following this, the existing building would be remodeled by the removal of the parapet wall around the same, the installation of a new roof, new air conditioning and the remodeling of the interior rooms to create an office for the church staff and a fellowship hall.

In late spring of 1965, the sanctuary with its decorations and furnishings were ready in time for the first service to be conducted on March 6, 1966. On March 20, 1966, Bishop Garber presided over the consecration service and the occasion was made more meaningful by the activities of the day which included the recognition of important people and events in the history of the Church.

The Sanctuary is a modified contemporary design which is both comfortable and inspirational. It has been the subject of approving comment by many church people who find the design and furnishings with its stained glass windows and vaulted ceiling conducive to, and appropriate for, worship.

Our need for a Chapel was met due to a very generous gift from Mr. J. H. Blount, of Greenville, North Carolina. The Chapel was constructed without any observable pause in the rate of work being performed on the church property.

One of the most striking aspects of the Chapel is the large stained glass "Methodist Window", which occupies the entire north end of the

Chapel. This window was designed in conjunction with our Architect and built by the George Payne Studios. It has been the subject of comment in religious publications, and of eye-catching interest to the observer. The theme of the window highlights the universality of Christ with recognition of the Methodist Church's founders and forerunners.

Our enlarged facilities and membership made it important that we petition the Conference for an additional minister. In 1966, the Conference assigned Rev. Frank Berry to St. James as Associate Pastor. Mr. Berry was a vital force in the enlargement of our educational department; and, in particular, the school for pre-school children was begun under his leadership and has continued to the present.

Following Mr. Berry's retirement due to ill health, Mr. James Starnes became our Associate Pastor, who in turn was assigned to Holy Trinity Church because of interconference changes necessitating the movement of the pastor at Holy Trinity. Holy Trinity United Methodist Church, now an active and prosperous congregation in East Greenville, was sponsored by St. James Church. The Pastor and the members have actively supported this church in its formation and through their gifts and continued interest.

The Rev. Lawrence A. Watts retired from active pastorates in 1965 and became associated with our church in his retired capacity. He became a unique and inspirational part of the pastorate of St. James as long as he was able to participate in the church program.

In the summers of 1966 and 1969, St. James Church participated in a Pastor Exchange Program with churches in England. During the summer months of these years, our church was served by the Rev. Allen Smith and the Rev. Dereck Evans, who were generous with their talents and with our members who were both impressed and blessed by these men of God.

The church has acquired two parsonages for its pastors, one at 114 Lord Ashley Drive (in 1967) for the principal pastor and one at 205 Adams Boulevard (in 1966) for the associate pastor.

In January of 1969, the old Greenville Junior High School located between Fourth and Fifth Streets was totally destroyed by fire. Their new school was in the process of construction and was not ready for occupancy. St. James Church offered its facilities to the school offi-

cial of Greenville for the use of the Junior High School students until the end of the school year. With the cooperation of the teachers, the administrators, the students and staff, St. James Church educational facilities were utilized by the students as well as the church without undue confusion or hardship. School graduation exercises were held in the Sanctuary in May, 1969.

At the close of the conference year in May, 1969, it was noted that the church membership had more than doubled under Mr. Quick's leadership. In June, 1969, Dermont Reid, as Principal Pastor, and David L. Hilton, as Associate, were assigned to this church. Their tenure terminated in 1969, when Christian White came to St. James as Principal Pastor and Gerald Peterson as Associate. One of the highlights of Mr. White's ministry was a trip to the Holy Land he conducted in 1973 for members of the church. This experience was both interesting and educational, and has become part of the cultural background of this church.

St. James Church has always been interested in the activities of the young and among its projects that it has sponsored in the past, some of which it continues to sponsor at the present, have been the Cub Scout program, the Boy Scout program, the Explorer Scout program, the Girl Scout program, the Pre-school Day School, the Kindergarten, an active MYF program, and the support of a recreational program for the Junior and Senior High School students.

Our church has always considered it a privilege to minister to our College Students, and over the years, their presence has added much to the program of the church and its emphasis. As a concrete result of the interest in youth, this church has furnished many young people to the ministry or to Christian professional careers.

The late Cara Lynn Fennell, one of the staunchest and most loyal members of St. James Church, established a fund in her Last Will, by which the church was able to beautify and hopes to maintain in perpetuity the inner court between the south entrance and the narthex. This lovely garden is green at all times during the year and is a source of great enjoyment and pleasure to our people.

At the untimely death of Mr. Frank Berry, his family donated Mr. Berry's books to the church to form a nucleus of a library. The Frank Berry Memorial Library has caught the interest of our active church mem-

bers and this Library has been fully set up and is maintained in comfortable surroundings and has a record of being used and enjoyed by many members of our church.

After the death of James Harvey Ward, Jr., his family established a generous scholarship fund in his memory. The church has been able to assist many deserving students with the income from this fund and this program makes up another part of a more complete ministry for the benefit of others.

In June, 1974, the Rev. F. Roderick Randolph, as Principal Pastor, and the Rev. James C. Lee, as Associate Pastor, were assigned to St. James Church. The congregation is fortunate to have pastors such as Mr. Randolph and Mr. Lee leading the church program and with their exhibited enthusiasm and dedicated work, it is a virtual certainty that the active program which has been a part of St. James' past shall continue to be a part of its present.

St. James looks forward to establishing in Greenville a spiritual body of Christian Believers, whose zeal and record of accomplishment will bear favorable comparison to any Church in this locality, and it looks forward to expanded services in enlarged quarters within the near future, all dedicated to the Glory of God.

Kenneth Gray Hite
October 6, 1974