

History
1955 - 1962

St. Paul's Methodist Church

607 Trail Two

Burlington, N.C.

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607 Trail 2, Grove Park

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Rev. Rufus H. Stark, Pastor

Compiled by:

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HISTORY
ST. PAUL'S METHODIST CHURCH

In the year of this writing, St. Paul's Methodist Church is one of the most recent additions to Methodism in Alamance County. The Congregation dates September 18, 1955 as the organizational meeting, but before and after that date there is a story to be told. Burlington is a growing city, and for some years prior to 1955, discerning Methodists were beginning to see that there was needed in the Grove Park Area a Methodist Church to serve the needs of the people in that community.

So it was that in the summer of 1955 two Duke students, under the direction of Dr. A. P. Brantley, Burlington District Superintendent, and the Rev. Tom Collins, Executive Secretary of the Board of Missions of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, made a survey of the entire Grove Park area. They found that of 700 homes surveyed, 126 were clearly Methodist Constituency.

After due publicity, a meeting date was set, and on September 18, 1955 a group of interested families met at 3:00 in the afternoon at nearby Shiloh Presbyterian Church. This group organized themselves into the duly constituted Grove Park Methodist Church and continued to meet for some six weeks at Shiloh Church, with the Rev. Frank E. Wier, first pastor. The Constituting Conference and First Quarterly Conference of the Church, presided over by Dr. A. P. Brantley, District Superintendent of the Burlington District, elected the following as Stewards: George Winfrey, Mrs. Eunice Wilson, Mrs. Melba Salmon, Forrest Deaton, Paul Wall, Mrs. H. D. Young, Willard Ted Lowe, Walter E. Bivens. Trustees elected were: Frank Overman, Grady B. Long, Bill Ward, Fred Darby, George Reid, and Bernard Oakley.

On Sunday, October 30, 1955, a merger which had been a possibility since before the church was even organized, was consummated. The new Grove Park Church and the Fountain Place Methodist Church merged to become the St. Paul's Methodist Church. The Rev. Mr. Wier was also serving as the pastor of Fountain Place Church prior to the time of the merger.

Since this merger is such a significant moment in the history of St. Paul's Church, it is essential that the History of Fountain Place Church be included in this account. For in the story of Fountain Place Church is the thrilling account of a group of Methodist Christians who ventured out to establish a Mission Congregation, built a building, payed for it, labored together in loyal service, then voted to sell their property, merge with the Grove Park Church, and begin again as a Mission Congregation.

For some time prior to 1922, the need was recognized for the establishment of a Methodist Protestant Church in the western portion of Burlington. The Rev. S. W. Taylor, Pastor of the First Methodist Protestant Church (now Davis Street Methodist Church) along with other Conference officials appointed a board to proceed with the selection of a site, the erection of a suitable building, and the organization of a church. This board, later to become the first official Board of Trustees, was composed of: J. E. Moore, R. F. Williams, M. A. Coble, W. R. Thompson, T. T. Stafford, Milo Scott, and C. B. Amick.

A large corner lot at Front and Atwater Streets was selected and purchased from C. F. Thompson and wife under the deed dated December 12, 1922. Building Contractors, Sharp and Bryant, erected a single story building which was used for services and Class rooms until the second and third floors could be completed. The construction was financed through a loan with the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company. The actual building and formulation of plans to raise funds were under the guidance of a Campaign Committee composed of members of both the First Methodist Protestant Church (now Davis Street Methodist Church) and the new Church. Serving from the new Church were: C. B. Amick, Chairman; H. W. Wade, Secretary and Treasurer, D. D. Glenn, T. A. Amick; and Rev. G. H. Hendry. Serving from the First Church were: J. G. Rogers,

Vice Chairman; Mrs. J. W. Huffman, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer; W. V. Coble; T. T. Stafford; and Rev. S. W. Taylor.

The first Sunday School was organized in July 1924, and the first pastor was Rev. C. J. Edwards, who also served the Gibsonville Methodist Protestant Church. Formal opening of the Sunday School Building was October 4, 1925, with the opening sermon by Dr. T. H. Lewis, President of the General Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church. Records indicate a membership of 81 as of October 28, 1925.

The selection of a name, Fountain Place Methodist Protestant Church, was perhaps influenced because of the nearness to the Fountain Place residential development; however, there is added emphasis placed upon its selection when we quote from the records: "The significance of the name may not be plain to all of us, but the thought in it is responsible for its adoption. We think of a fountain as a place to quench our natural thirst, and we want to think of this fountain as a place where we and everybody can quench our thirst for spiritual goodness."

Pastors serving Fountain Place Church prior to the merger were: Rev. G. J. Edwards, Rev. C. H. Hendry, Rev. W. M. Loy, Rev. N. G. Bethea, Rev. R. C. Stubbins, Rev. W. M. Loy, Rev. R. E. L. Moser, Rev. C. J. Andrews, Rev. R. H. Lewis, Rev. Thad McDonald, Rev. R. P. Fridley, Rev. L. P. Jackson, Rev. O. L. Hinson, Rev. D. J. Reid, Rev. J. C. Loy, Rev. Wm. Starnes, and Rev. Frank Wier.

From 1924 to 1955, for 31 years, pastors and members of Fountain Place Church labored faithfully together. For all of those years the pastor was a circuit preacher with more than one Church to his charge; sometimes it was three and sometimes more. Fountain Place Church never grew to great size, but what it lacked in size it made up in enthusiasm and loyalty in its fellowship.

One reason for some lack of numerical growth seems to have been that West Burlington had become rapidly over-Churched with Methodist Churches. Soon after the Fountain Place Church had been started by the Methodist Protestants, Front Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South, sponsored a Mission nearby, which came to be called the West Burlington Methodist Episcopal Church, South. After Methodist Union in 1939, these Churches became a part of the same Denomination.

Several attempts to effect a merger of Fountain Place Church and West Burlington Church were made, but none of these efforts bore fruit. Finally in 1954, when the possibility of a Church forming in the Grove Park Area was recognized, under the leadership of Dr. Allen P. Brantley, District Superintendent, it was noted that a good proportion of the Fountain Place Church Membership lived in the vicinity of Grove Park.

Thus, discussion began to arise among the fellowship of Fountain Place Church regarding the possibility of a merger with the group which would soon be organized in Grove Park.

This issue seemed to have two sides. One side noted that Fountain Place had begun as a Mission Church: that the fellowship had given of themselves without reserve to erect a Church School building, and now the building was fully paid for. The building appeared adequate for their present needs and although prospects for growth were not too promising, at least the fellowship was out of debt.

The arguments on the other side of the issue pointed out that a Church which is not growing soon loses its vitality and spiritual freshness; that even though the building was paid for, it provided little room if the Church were to grow; that since a number of the fellowship already lived in the vicinity of Grove Park, a Church there would be convenient to them; and finally that this was a real opportunity to be of service to the Lord Christ in giving of the substance of Fountain Place Church to help birth a new Church on a growing edge of the city.

After much discussion the members of Fountain Place Church reached one mind and heart and voted to venture forth for the second time to have a part in the founding of a new Church to the Glory of God. A few of the Fountain Place Church Congregation, due to their nearness to other Churches in West Burlington, did not go with the merger, but by far the largest percentage did merge.

On October 30, 1955, then, the 31 year old fellowship of Fountain Place Church ventured forth to join hands with the newly formed Grove Park Church. Their first action was to choose the name St. Paul's Methodist Church, after the greatest Missionary of the Gospel. In the merger the Fountain Place Church gave of itself to birth the Fellowship of St. Paul's Methodist Church. Our Lord Christ said: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." John 12:24.

Now the new Congregation turned its thoughts toward expansion and the erection of a building. During these early years guidance was given by the pastor, Rev. Frank Wier, and much time and energy was given in helping the new Church get started by Dr. A. P. Brantley, the Burlington District Superintendent.

In January, 1956, the Building Committee selected Mr. R. R. Markley of Durham as architect, and planning was begun. Many months of planning were necessary before the plan was completed.

Meanwhile a Building Fund campaign was carried out and money began to be accumulated, in addition to that which had been collected by Fountain Place Church for several years. Early in 1957 the Fountain Place Church building was sold for \$25,000.00 and a small frame building to the nearby congregation of Disciples of Christ, who became the Front Street Christian Church. In addition to these funds the Board of Missions of the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church granted \$15,000.00 to St. Paul's through the "Ten Dollar Club". These several funds amassed helped the fellowship get on its feet.

Mr. Mumford Gerringer began the task of moving the frame building which was received in exchange from the Disciples' group, but rain came before it left the lot and St. Paul's Church met for about a month in Rich and Thompson Funeral Home. Then the move to the new land purchased by St. Paul's Church was effected, and the Congregation looked forward to Easter Sunday worship on their new location in Grove Park.

Easter Sunday, April 17, 1957, was a great day in the life of the young Church. In addition to being Easter Day, this Sunday was Charter Sunday as well as the first Sunday for Worship in their new location and the day for Groundbreaking for the new building. Those who were Charter members in both Fountain Place Church and St. Paul's were designated Honor Charter Members. These Honor Charter Members were as follows: C. B. Amick, Mrs. C. B. Amick, T. A. Amick, Mrs. T. A. Amick, Irving Amick, Lednum Amick, G. C. Fogleman, Mrs. G. C. Fogleman, Wade Fogleman, C. L. Jones, Mrs. C. L. Jones, Mrs. C. T. Lindberry, Mrs. Morris Roach, James P. Scott, Mrs. J. E. Steele, Mrs. H. M. Terrell, Mrs. Sam Turner. In addition there were 81 Charter Members, as follows: Opal Allen, Hazel Alphine, Pomona Amick, Aubrey Amick, Jr., Larry Amick, Howard Barbee, Bill Bradsher, Henry Brewer, Sandra Brewer, Ben Crotts, Brenda Crotts, Vivian Davis, F. W. Parrott, George Fogleman, Donna Fogleman, Thomas W. Fogleman, Ruby Gay, Virginia Gerringer, Occo Gibbs, Royce Gibbs, Millie Hinshaw, Grady Long, Ted Lowe, Myrtle Mason, Steve Lowe, Dennis Miller, Wanda Miller, Charles Nance, James Parrott, Harold Schultz, Joseph Shoaf, Larston Smith, Winnie Sparks, Jack Steele, Hubert Terrell, Robert Whitemore, George Winfrey, Robert Young, Betty Zammitt, Ronald Fogleman, James Glenn Fogleman, Carolyn Allen, Aubrey Amick, Sr., Gordon Amick, Beulah Amick, Wayne Amick, Corda Barts, Inez Bradsher, Helen Brewer, Marie Brown, Eunice Crotts, John Davis Bill Euliss, Amenda Parrott, Hilda Fogleman, Betty Fogleman, Willard Fogleman, Horace

W. Fogleman, Walter Gay, Wayne Gerringer, Pink Gibbs, Mary Gibbs, Ivan Hinshaw, Lucille Hodgins, Mildred Long, Martha Lowe, R. G. McCauley, Bessie Miller, Ralph Miller, Matilda Montjoy, Linda Nance, Bertha Parrott, Mrs. Harold Schultz, Edith Shoaf, Ann Smith, Lala Stafford, Joy Stone, Jackie Terrell, Charlotte Whittemore, Olive Winfrey, and Eva Young. In all there were 98 members in the new Congregation.

The Building Committee had decided, reluctantly, that the cost of a "regular" contract would be prohibitive, and that the building must be built, therefore, on a cost-plus basis with volunteer labor. A truck was purchased for hauling materials, and members of the congregation assisted by driving and by unloading. Many suppliers assisted with discounts on materials furnished the Church.

This procedure of building resulted in a great deal of pressure for many persons, and indeed for the whole congregation. Besides the hundreds of hours taken from other pursuits, there were uncertainties, the day-by-day worry over many decisions, and the sense of danger to persons doing unfamiliar work. There were some minor accidents, but fortunately none which resulted in severe injury.

The building contractor, Mr. Lester Jessup, not only was generous with the terms of his contract but also with time and care expended in helping to insure the best possible building. The sub-contractors and workmen showed a similar concern. Those serving on the Building Committee (not all at the same time) during the years of construction were: George Winfrey, Chairman; Henry Brewer, Ralph Miller, C. B. Nance, Ivan Hinshaw, O. D. Gibbs, A. V. Amick, H. M. Terrell, T. L. Amick, Treva Ward, Ann Smith, Lala Stafford, Martha Lowe, Grady Long, Mrs. C. T. Lineberry, Mrs. Willard Johnson, Mrs. Bessie Miller, James Parrott, Mrs. T. L. Amick, Odell Salmon, J. W. Etheridge, Walter Wilson, Howard Barbee, W. L. Gerringer, Jr., Helen Brewer, J. Frederick Darby, H. D. Young, Jr., and V. E. York.

Finally, on June 15, 1958, the new Church building was opened for worship. Even then, much remained to be done, but a large and joyous step had been completed. Many persons had contributed, and all deserved credit. It was appropriate that George Winfrey, who had remained faithful as Chairman of the Building Committee and whose sacrificial service typified that of the whole congregation, should hand a set of keys to C. B. Amick, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and a faithful charter member of Fountain Place Church. He, too, stood for the whole congregation in its long-held dream of a truly effective serving and witnessing Church.

The new building, with organ and furnishings, was valued at \$95,000.00. The building is of modified Georgian design, a one-story, solid masonry construction. The sanctuary, which shows a definite colonial influence in interior design will seat approximately 300. The educational wing, a first unit, includes eight class rooms, kitchen, pastor's study, rest rooms, and heating plant. The steeple was not erected at the time of opening of the Church. The Church had negotiated a loan of \$30,000.00 with the First Federal Savings and Loan of Burlington to pay costs of the building.

Those who participated in the opening service were aware that this too was only a beginning. Even with the difficulties encountered, we knew that the really hard task lay ahead, in building a house not made with hands.

On the last Sunday in June, 1958, the Rev. Mr. Wier ended his tenure of service as pastor of the Church after giving outstanding, dedicated leadership from the very outset. He was appointed to serve as a member of the editorial staff of the Methodist Board of Education, and he and his family moved to Nashville, Tennessee. The new pastor, the Rev. Rufus H. Stark, began his service on the first Sunday of July of that year.

Although the Congregation had reached a milestone in the completion of the

sanctuary and first unit of the educational building, they were not of a mind to rest on their laurels. The Church did not own a parsonage: the pastor at that time was living in a rented dwelling on Atwater Street. After seriously considering the possibility of purchasing a house in the vicinity of the Church, the decision was made to build.

A beautiful wooded lot adjacent to the Church property was purchased from Mr. M. A. Coble, from whom the Church property had also been purchased. A Building Committee was appointed consisting of the following members: Hubert M. Terrell, Chairman; Miss Lala Stafford, Secretary; Ralph Miller, C. B. Nance, Ivan Hinshaw, O. D. Gibbs, A. V. Amick, C. L. Welborn, T. L. Amick, John Patterson, Watus Fuquay, Bill Fogleman, Joe Shoaf, Grady B. Long, George Winfrey, Henry Brewer, and Rev. R. H. Stark.

Feeling the cost of letting a full contract on the building again prohibitive, the Building Committee proposed to oversee the work with Mr. Terrell at the lead. Many people of the Church shared in the work which began in October, 1958, and Mr. Terrell's devoted leadership carried the project through to completion in July, 1959. The parsonage is a lovely eight room, brick veneered structure with carport. It was built and modestly furnished for \$14,500, which was secured through a loan from Community Federal Savings and Loan Association.

On September 16, 1962, St. Paul's Church will be seven years old. These years have been eventful ones, meeting the challenges which confront the birth of a new Church. The congregation is again turning its thoughts to the need for more building along with its concern for the many areas of need in the world. The fellowship is a witnessing body seeking to carry the faith to all in its community and beyond into all the world. As the number of members increases, it is devotedly hoped that the spiritual depth of each member will likewise grow.
