

Church History

While the effects of slavery was still fresh in the minds of many African American people, a small group of dedicated Christians who trusted God to release them from the bounds of captivity, began to seek a proper place in which to praise God for all the mighty works they had celebrated. Out of the small house gatherings, arose the idea of a central house of worship. A place where God's people could gather on the Lord's day and sing, pray, and hear God's word. This worthy endeavor took the strength and courage of the entire community as the church began to move from vision to reality. Land was purchased by the trustees in 1876 and again in 1917. The trustees listed on the deed that is dated April 3, 1876 are Lawson Wright and Berry Williams of Granville County. This first tract was for the erection of a one room structure that was called Saint Peter's Methodist Episcopal Church. This first church was located on Hillsboro Street in Oxford, North Carolina next door to the present BP gas station. The other tract of land may have been purchased for future expansions or parking. During Reverend Newsome's pastorate the church was remodeled and two wings were added to the sides of the church.

There was an active Epworth League Club, which was an organization for young people. In the absence of a Missionary Circle, the women met with other church women in the area. Some of the ministers who served in the first structure were: Rev. Baxter, Rev. Thomas, Rev. Jenkins, Rev. Harris, Rev. McMaster, Rev. Isham, Rev. Rush, Rev. West, Rev. Prince, Rev. Newsome, and in the fall of 1925 Rev. James Walter Hall became the pastor of St. Peter's Methodist Episcopal Church, the name of the church at that time. When Rev. Hall arrived he found a small membership worshipping in an old building with a small pile of bricks in the rear, hoping and praying one day to build a new church. This was great for Rev. Hall because he always wanted to build a church from the ground up. In 1944 they began to raise money for the new church. This was done by dividing the membership into three groups according to the section of town in which the member lived. They met every week at the home of one of the members of the group, and gave money which was reported on the second Sunday in each month.

The Ray Lumber Company was on one side of the church and a welding shop was on the other side. The parsonage was behind the church and almost invisible to the people that passed by in the front. Rev. Hall and family lived in the parsonage for twelve years. In 1940 Rev. and Mrs. Hall bought their own home on Granville Street, and remodeled it then moved in. After a short time in their new home, a wheel on the saw in the lumber yard next door to the church broke, and a part of the wheel went through the church and another part landed in the cemetery some distance in the opposite direction. The man who was operating the saw was killed instantly and some of his blood spattered on the church.

In the meantime, World War II was coming to an end and the government was selling the churches which had been used at Camp Butner during the war. St. Peter's decided to purchase one, thinking it would be cheaper than building from the ground. When Rev. Hall went to Butner to see one of these buildings that was being torn down to be moved to Asheville, N.C. he agreed that the church should purchase a building.

After consultation with the trustees, the church decided to sell the structure and try to build a church from the ground up. The Methodist Society, an organization of ministers in Durham came to the home of Rev. and Mrs. Hall seeking to buy the building for a Methodist Church in Butner. St. Peter's decided to sell the building for the sum of \$1,500 the same amount that was given to the government originally.

The land on Hillsboro Street was sold to Ray Lumber Company. No monies were given because St. Peter's received credit toward the lumber that was needed for the new church. Dreams were realized in 1950 with the ground breaking and later completion of the church at its present site at the corner of Linden Avenue and Front Street with a membership of ninety-one. The first service in the new church was on May 27, 1951. It was an exciting and glorious time for the congregation and the community. On Monday night, May 28th Bishop Alexander Preston Shaw, resident bishop came to celebrate this great blessing with the pastor and congregation by preaching a soul stirring sermon.

The new church, which is two story, contains the sanctuary, a fellowhall, three class rooms, a kitchen, and restrooms for the women and men downstairs. A new organ was purchased for the church shortly after. Reverend J.W. Hall served St. Peter's Church for twenty-seven years, the longest pastorate to date. We were blessed to have serving at one time as treasurer for thirty-seven years, Mrs. Mary Hall Scott, the daughter of Reverend and Mrs James Walter Hall.

Rev. Hall continued serve St. Peter's until his health began to fail under the heavy weight he carried for many years, and finally had to give up the pastorate. Rev. R.J. Shipp (retired) was sent to finish the year for Rev. Hall. After nineteen months of illness he went home to be with our Lord on September 8, 1953. When the annual conference convened, Rev. J.W. Gwyn was sent to serve the charge. He served four years as the pastor. The building program continued during the leadership of Rev. Gwyn with an addition to the church that served as the parsonage for the pastoral family. Included in this addition, which was also two story, was a livingroom, diningroom, kitchen, and utility room on the first floor, and three bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor.

The active clubs consisted of the Methodist Youth Fellowship, Methodist Men, Women Society of Christian Service, and Willing Workers. Along with the membership there were many pastors that had gifts that extended beyond the local church. Some were painters, carpenters, and had other trades that the church could appreciate and find use for as it moved into the future. Rev. I.A. Friend put in new pews for the church, Rev. Cobb did interior painting of the church and parsonage. After Rev. Cobb's tenure, two students for Duke Divinity served as pastors; they were Reverends Palmer and Banks. Reverend Gregory Palmer was elected bishop in July 2000. In 1977, Reverend Albert Shuler became the pastor of the Granville-Vance Charge which includes St. Peter's, Zoar Chapel, and Hargrove Chapel. Under Rev. Shuler's leadership, plans were made for a new parsonage. Ground breaking services at the new site was in February of 1978. The District Superintendent, Dr. H.L. Watson was one of the participants along with other ministers on the program. In July of 1978 the new parsonage was completed. Many gifts were given by the conference, district, and

friends. Consecration Service for the new parsonage was conducted on December 10, 1978 with Bishop Blackburn preaching.

On June 25, 1978, the first Homecoming Service was held. There were two worship services, one at 11 a.m. with Dr. Joseph Bethea preaching, followed by a fellowship dinner, and another at 2 p.m. with Rev. Theodore V. Carter preaching. The theme was "Saint Peter's Through the Years." Rev. J.W. Gwyn was in attendance representing the former ministers that were invited. The highlight of the worship was the crowning of the King and Queen, senior members of the church.

Rev. David Dunlap followed Rev. Albert Shuler as pastor and served until June 1983 when Rev. Jesse Brunson was appointed pastor. Rev. Brunson served with honor and distinction as did those who followed. The gospel choir was started under Rev. Brunson with the leadership of sister Mary P. Jones (died 2000). In 1987, Rev. and Mrs. Derrick Harris came to St. Peter's UMC. The Harris family brought with them an unusual ministry, one that was new to the congregation. Their ministry was unusual in that both of them were attending Duke Divinity School while appointed to this charge. After their tenure Rev. Walter Mcleod was appointed in 1991 and with him came the experience of being an older seasoned pastor that had served in the local church several years before coming here. His love and concern for the church body helped to mend many of the wounds that St. Peter's had suffered under some of the previous pastors.

Rev. Mcleod was appointed to the Asbury Temple in Durham at the 1994 annual conference and Rev. Donnie L. Jones our present pastor was appointed to St. Peter's. Rev. Jones comes to us with some of the same experiences that Rev. Mcleod brought and more. He also served the local church for several years before coming to St. Peter's. Along with Rev. Jones comes wife (Brenda) and two children (Medina and Kevin) who work in and for the church. A renovation project took hold to the congregation and they began to work. Rev. Jones and brother James Lyons painted the entire lower floor inside the church. Brother Lyons has gone on to glory, but his great devotion and hard work for Saint Peter's will never be forgotten. We must not forget to mention the donation of the ping pong table, television and VCR by bro. Eddie Carroll, Sr. a beloved layman in this church and community.

In 1994 an entrance door was cut through the twelve inch wall in the fellowship hall giving access to the old parsonage section of the church that has been renovated and now is renamed the educational wing. This section contains an African Heritage room, a unisex restroom, prayer room, and a choir room.

The United Methodist Women have given a large new stage curtain for the fellowship hall that matches the carpet in the sanctuary. Sister Hattie Hester gave new linoleum for the kitchen floor and sister Dorothy Wimbush gave curtains for the windows. Five lighted exit signs have been installed to insure safety in case of fire or blackout. Brother and sister William Birch donated and installed a ceiling fan for the kitchen. The front doors of the church have been refinished with brass kickplates at the bottoms and new locks installed. The outside of the church has many flowers and shrubs planted along with new grass that remains green all year. A candle set for the communion table was also purchased for the church. Sister Brenda Jones started a monthly prayer breakfast and UMW meeting. The UMM has regrouped and is moving

forward under the leadership of brother John Hunt. We also have UMM patches for our blazers or coats.

New cabinets were installed in the kitchen and a new refrigerator was purchased. Sister Riddick gave new curtains for the windows in the kitchen and sister Landora Downey donated new linoleum for the floor. Four new ceiling fans were added to the fellowship hall. The sanctuary was painted during the first week of May and all the cracks in the ceiling and walls were repaired. A steeple was installed with lightning protection in January 97. One thing that we have always needed was more parking space, well the Lord has blessed Saint Peter's with a new parking area that will hold at least thirty cars, two doors down from the church at 204 West Front street. It was purchased in September of 98.

The membership of Saint Peter's United Methodist Church appears never to have been very large; however, it had been composed of people who put their trust in God and felt that with God all things were possible. St. Peter's United Methodist Church (the present name) has survived segregation, two world wars, integration, the election and death of many presidents, and many other adverse conditions.

As we celebrate the greatness of God in this one hundred and twenty-third year of ministry to the Oxford community, the state of North Carolina, and the World, we can only say, "to God be the glory for the great things God has done." The theme for 1999 is "123 years of Unity in Christ." Our ancestors would be proud of the heritage that we continue. Their prayers and our prayers have been answered and their visions along with our visions have been brought to reality.

Many of our beloved members have traded this earthy realm for that heavenly residence since the last Homecoming celebration. We thank God for allowing them the precious time that they spent with the members of Saint Peter's United Methodist Church. They are deeply missed by family, members, and friends. May God bless you.

Sister Mary H. Scott retired in 1998 after serving as church treasurer for thirty-seven years. She was recognized with a plaque on the third Sunday in December and that Sunday proclaimed "Mary H. Scott Day" in Saint Peter's UMC.

A new air condition unit was installed after the old one refused to continue. The entire church was insulated this year (99) which helps control the heat and air. The Granville-Vance charge has been a student appointment for over twenty years and the gifts that those students brought will impact this church for years to come. The church realized that if could not grow spiritually or physically without a full-time pastor. After much prayer and conversation, the bishop, district superintendent, cabinet, and the charge decided that the best action to take for this charge was to become full-time. Reverend D.L. Jones is now our full-time pastor. May our God continue to richly bless this ministry through his son Jesus Christ and with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the giver of Life.

The Reverend Glenda Johnson is district superintendent and our preacher for this Homecoming celebration 1999. We join together to welcome Reverend Glenda Johnson to our celebration. We pray also for your success. May you have many blessed years on the district. The new millenium (2000) brought many additions to St. Peter's UMC. We were blessed with a new public address system, new chanderliers for the sanctuary, a new digital piano/organ, and a new pulpit exit door. A choir loft has

been added this year (2001) which will accommodate twenty-five persons, the piano, and the organ. The general contractor for this construction was brother John Sanders of Sanders Construction Company. Eleven new stained glass windows were installed in June 2001 that have added more beauty and sacredness to the worship space. The old windows that were taken out will serve as replacements for the windows we didn't replace that are in the fellowship hall.

This certainly can be remembered as a history making year as we have Bishop Marion Edwards as the preacher for our 125th church anniversary. This is the very first time that a presiding bishop has preached at Saint Peter's United Methodist Church at the homecoming and anniversary celebration. What a joy it was to have Bishop Edwards to join in with us as we lift high the cross of Jesus Christ in song, word, fellowship, and praise. "Whatever happened to sin" was the bishop's sermon from Luke 15: 11-32. A soul stirring message for the multitude of persons in attendance.

The Lord God Almighty has been particularly good to Saint Peter's Church.

"The Vision Continues"

June 24, 2001

11:00 am

<i>Processional Hymn</i>		<i>Minister Shawn Carroll</i>
<i>Call to Worship</i>		<i>Pastor D.L. Jones</i>
<i>Selection</i>		<i>Saint Peter's UMC Mass Choir</i>
<i>Morning Prayer</i>		<i>Minister Brenda Jones</i>
<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>(Genesis 1:1-31)</i>	<i>Brother Charles D. Cooper</i>
<i>New Testament</i>	<i>(Luke 8:26-39)</i>	
<i>The Affirmation of Faith</i>	<i>(Apostles' Creed p.881)</i>	<i>Pastor D.L. Jones</i>
<i>Welcome</i>		<i>Sister Juanita Rogers</i>
<i>The Occasion</i>		<i>Sister Angela Bowden</i>
<i>Announcements</i>		<i>Sister Nelda Carroll</i>
<i>Selection</i>		<i>Saint Peter's UMC Mass Choir</i>
<i>Introduction of the Preacher</i>		<i>Reverend Glenda Johnson</i> <i>Durham District Superintendent</i>
<i>Selection</i>		<i>Saint Peter's UMC Mass Choir</i>
<i>Homecoming Preacher:</i>		<i>Bishop Marion Edwards</i> <i>Episcopal Leader Raleigh Area of the UMC</i> <i>Raleigh, North Carolina</i>
<i>Invitation to Christian Discipleship/Prayer</i>		<i>Pastor D.L. Jones</i>
<i>Invitational Hymn</i>		<i>Saint Peter's UMC Mass Choir</i>
<i>Homecoming Offering and Offertory</i>		<i>Ushers/Congregation</i>
<i>Closing Selection</i>		<i>Saint Peter's UMC Mass Choir</i>
<i>Benediction and Blessing</i>		<i>Minister Brenda Jones</i>

Pastoral Appointments at Saint Peter's United Methodist Church

1876	<i>W. Walker</i>	1977	<i>Banks/Palmer (Bishop 2000)</i>
1877	<i>D. Brooks</i>	1977-80	<i>Albert Shuler (DS 1990)</i>
1878	<i>R. Alexander</i>	1980-83	<i>David Dunlap</i>
1879-80	<i>W.H. Payne</i>	1983-87	<i>Jesse Brunson</i>
1881	<i>L.B. Gibson</i>	1987-91	<i>Derrick Harris</i>
1882	<i>To be supplied</i>	1991-94	<i>Walter E. Mcleod</i>
1883	<i>C.N. Grandison</i>	1994-2001	<i>Donnie L. Jones</i>
1884-85	<i>A. Newsome</i>		
1886	<i>To be supplied</i>		
1887	<i>A.M. Turner</i>		
1888	<i>To be supplied</i>		
1889-90	<i>Melton M. Jones</i>		
1891	<i>David Connell</i>		
1892-93	<i>T.S. Stitt</i>		
1894-95	<i>R.C. Campbell</i>		
1896	<i>S.B. Barker</i>		
1897	<i>Not listed</i>		
1898	<i>W.R. Ziegler</i>		
1899-1900	<i>G.F. Hill</i>		
1901-02	<i>G.W. McMaster</i>		
1903-04	<i>William Wells</i>		
1905	<i>To be supplied</i>		
1906-07	<i>J.C. Prince</i>		
1908-11	<i>A.H. Newsome</i>		
1912-14	<i>A.G. Jenkins</i>		
1915-16	<i>J.A. Baxter</i>		
1917	<i>R.J. Shipp</i>		
1918-20	<i>J.C. Rush</i>		
1921	<i>To be supplied</i>		
1922-23	<i>D.L. Thomas</i>		
1924-25	<i>J.H. Isham</i>		
1925-53	<i>J.W. Hall (The longest pastorate in St. Peter's history)</i>		
1953-57	<i>J.W. Gwyn</i>		
1958-59	<i>L.W. Coltrane</i>		
1960	<i>W.E. Tyler</i>		
1961	<i>C.G. Bynum</i>		
1962-67	<i>I.A. Friend</i>		
1968-72	<i>T.V. Carter, Sr.</i>		
1972-73	<i>James White</i>		
1973-77	<i>Charles Cobb</i>		