

WESLEY'S CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
*Franklinton, N.C.*  
FOUNDED: 1853

## THE HISTORY OF WESLEY'S CHAPEL CHURCH

The first Methodist Church in our community was begun as a "brush arbor" in 1790, when Francis Asbury and other early Methodist Circuit Riders passed through preaching the Word of God. It became Pope's Chapel Christian Church in 1847, when some of the Methodist Churches separated from the Conference over the issue of whether the Pastor should be appointed by the Bishop or called by the Congregation.

Wesley's Chapel was born in the wake of these events. Several families including the Whitfields and Cookes remained loyal to the Methodist Church and began to meet to start a new Methodist Church. In 1853 a one room wooden Church was located on the land which the Church now stands (See Granville County Register, Book 17, page 263). It was named Wesley's Chapel after Mr. John Wesley Whitfield, who was a member of the congregation.

Not much is known about the Church in those early years. We know from historical records that in 1881 Wesley's Chapel was one of eight Churches on the "Tar River" Circuit; the others being, Bank's Chapel, Ebenezer, Franklinton, Grove Hill, Kittrell, Plank Chapel and Trinity. In 1889, the Conference formed the "Franklinton" Circuit with Franklinton, Bank's Chapel, Grove Hill and Wesley's Chapel being together. In 1919, Franklinton and Wesley's Chapel were together on the "Franklinton Charge".

In 1917-18, Wesley's Chapel began its first Sunday School. Mr. B. L. Bragg, Sr. was the first Superintendent. The Church had a picnic to organize classes and Mrs. Maggie Cooke, and Mrs. Vic Cooke made two cakes which the early members still talk about. One used the white of the egg to make her cake, and the other used the yellow of the egg to make hers. A photo of the early Sunday School is a part of this history. In those days, the Church was a meeting place for many groups. The Young people often walked to Church at Wesley's and stayed on the Church grounds till sundown when they would go home to feed the horses.

In 1939 when Reverend Seymour E. Mercer was Pastor, Wesley's Chapel had preaching once a month at 3pm. In 1952, Reverend Sidney T. Davis began holding services twice a month. In 1954, Reverend Walter McDonald moved the services to 9:30am. In 1973-74, Reverend Paul Leland began holding services every Sunday at Wesley's.

1954 was a big year for Wesley's Chapel. In that year the Church Cemetery was begun on three acres of land. It was started when the Bragg Family Cemetery which had been located on the Wayside Farm Road was moved to the Church. Also, the Church began to make plans in 1954 for the building of a new brick Church. A Mr. Berger drew up the plans for the roof, and he was the same man who had designed the Radio City Music Hall in New York City. 1954 was also infamously remembered as the year Hurricane Hazel stripped the tin roof off the old wooden Church building. The storm came through the community on a Friday and the congregation held services on Sunday with clear sky overhead. Reverend Walter McDonald led the members in singing, "Count Your Many Blessings." The Church had much to give thanks for, for although the roof had been blown off there was no water damage in the Sanctuary.

Not one hymnbook was wet. Mr. B. L. Bragg, Sr. put a new roof on the Church before services began the following Sunday.

In 1955, Wesley's Chapel held a successful Vacation Bible School Program. This encouraged the members to start holding Sunday School again. The previous Classes begun in 1917-18 having dwindled and stopped. Mr. Harold Berger was elected the New Superintendent, and he was followed by Mr. Thomas Harris in 1958.

In 1958, the New Church building was completed and dedicated. It is the present structure in use by the congregation. It was built at a cost of \$ 14,480.00.

Wesley's Chapel held it's first Homecoming Services in June of 1960. These proved a great blessing to the members and these services have continued annually. In 1968, Homecoming was moved to May to avoid conflicts in Pastoral changes.

The United Methodist Women began to meet at Wesleys in 1962. Mrs. Dorothea Bridges, wife of the Pastor, (Lawrence Bridges), helped to organize the Unit. Charter members were: Mrs. Mildred Blackley, Mrs. Eleanor Bragg, Mrs. Elizabeth Bragg, Mrs. Dorothea Bridges, Mrs. Dorothy Evans, Mrs. Verna Evans, Mrs. Edith Gulley, Mrs. Dorothy Harris, Mrs. Elna Holmes, Mrs. Ina Holmes, Mrs. Edith Pope, and Mrs. Ida Suitt. Through the years, the United Methodist Women been an active part of the Church life. In 1977, they helped start the annual Harvest Day Celebration, when a combination of Church Covered Dish meals, and UMW Bazaar for Missions created an exciting event. In 1987, the UMW made the Churches first Christmon tree, and during the services in Advent, explained the meaning of the special Christian Symbols to the congregation.

In 1974, the Church added a new fellowship hall to it's facilities. This was built with love and care by the Church Members who were led by Mr. Arthur Evans, and with lots of help from the Duke Endowment. The first event in the new fellowship hall was the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Evans.

The Church added a New Sign in 1978. This was built by Mr. Forrest Mustin with plans donated by Mr. Samuel Hodges. It proudly displayed the Church name in bold white letters and was completed at a cost of \$2,000, on July 8-9. It was followed on October 25, 1987, by a new Church welcome sign built by Mr. Carlton Holmes, and lumber supplied by Mr. R. A. Pope, and letters donated by Mr. John Freeman. Reverend Michael Davis dedicated the sign following the morning service.

In 1979, Wesley's Chapel received a new carpet which was installed by Mr. & Mrs. Jim Reynolds. Later, a new walkway was added by the Reynolds family, in memory of Mr. Jim Reynolds who passed away in 1982.

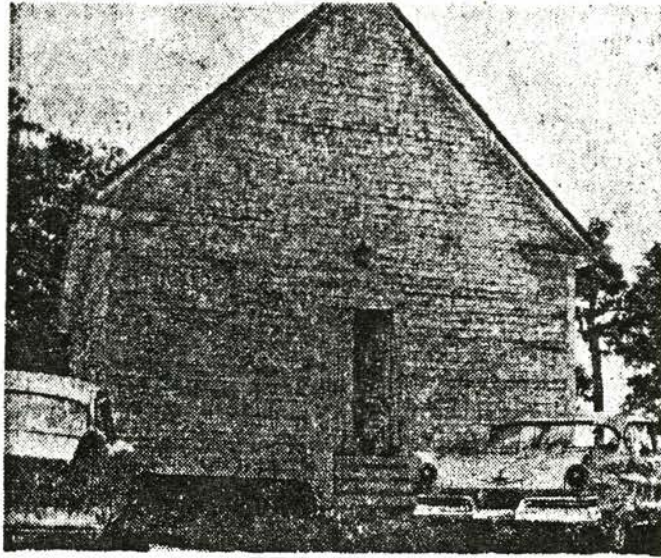
1986 saw Mr. Thomas Harris selected as "Lay Man of the Year in the Raleigh District." This was the first time one of Wesley's Chapel's members had received such an honor. In that same year, Reverend Randy Wall started a Bible Study Group at the Church.

This was continued by Reverend Michael Davis with some of the Books studied being: Philippians, John, Mark, Ephesians, James, Revelation, and Genesis.

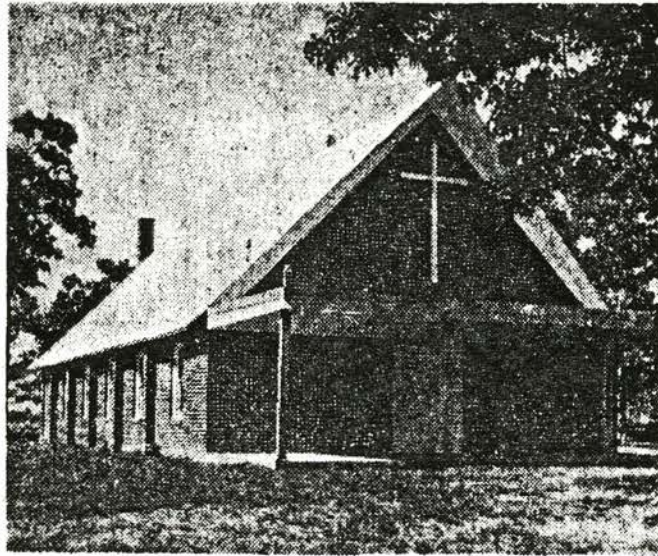
1987 was a dramatic year for Wesley's Chapel. In August, the Church had it's first Talent Show. Members shared their talents by singing, telling stories and jokes, as we discovered the many hidden talents in our congregation. In September, the District Superintendent, Dr. Joseph Bethea met with the members of all three Churches on the Franklinton Charge to discuss a request by the Franklinton Congregation to become a Station appointment in June of 1988. Dr. Bethea listened to the concerns of all three Churches and reassured the members of the support of the United Methodist Church in continuing their work of vital ministry. It was decided that Franklinton would be made a seperate appointment, and that Ebenezer and Wesley's Chapel would go together to form a Charge.

Wesley's Chapel is proud of it's many years of service to our community. The love and concern of Church members has always been the strength of our Church. With faith in God, and trust in His divine guidance, we look forward to writing new chapters in the history of our Church.

February, 1988



First Church Building: Constructed in 1853 and used till 1958 by the Congregation.



Second Church Building: Constructed in 1958 and in use by our Congregation today.



WESLEY'S CHAPEL CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS-CA. 1918

1988 LIST OF WESLEY'S CHAPEL MEMBERS

Allen, Lisa	Leonard, Aislee
Blackley, Betsy	Leonard, Cecil
Blackley, Earl	Moss, Joe E.
Blackley, Lisa	Newcomb, Cathy H.
Blackley, Rosa Lee	Pope, Bruce
Blinson, Charles	Pope, Edith
Blinson, Mildred	Pope, Michael
Bradley, Sharon	Pope, R. A.
Bragg, Ann	Reynolds, Van
Bragg, B. L.	Taylor, Joyce
Bragg, Dennis	Thompson, Lu Ann
Bragg, Eleanor	Trogden, Veronica H.
Bragg, Elizabeth	Zielinski, Ida
Bragg, Medicus	
Bragg, Owen	
Bragg, Phyllis	
Bragg, Rose Marie	
Bragg, Taylor	
Bragg, Vernon, Jr.	
Bragg, Vivian	
Burger, Gina	
Edwards, Donna	
Edwards, Robin	
Evans, Craig	
Evans, Donald	
Evans, Donald, Jr.	
Evans, Dorothy	
Freeman, Cameron	
Freeman, John I.	
Gulley, Edith	
Gulley, Susan	
Gulley, Thomas	
Hagwood, Betty	
Harris, Bobby	
Harris, Deborah	
Harris, Dorothy	
Harris, Renay	
Harris, Thomas	
Harris, Wayne	
Hayes, Jim	
Hoffman, Angelia	
Holmes, Carlton	
Holmes, Elna	
Johnson, Diane	

PREPARATORY MEMBERS

Bradley, Ann Marie  
Bradley, George Ronald  
Bradley, Mary Kay  
Edwards, Heather  
Edwards, Nicky  
Gulley, Melissa  
Gulley, Yancey  
Harris, Matthew Thomas

WESLEY'S CHAPEL PASTORS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>
(Tar River Circuit - 19 Churches)	
1853	William Carter
1853-54	William Carter, James W. Wheeler
1856-57	Lemon Shell, James F. Smoot, J. W. Floyd
1858	William M. Jordan, R. C. Maynard
1859-60	Joseph B. Martin, James Reid
1861	William H. Barnes, R. C. Maynard
1862-63	T. Page Ricard
1864-65	Joseph H. Wheeler, William Harris
1866	Joseph H. Wheeler
1867	J. P. Simpson
1868-1871	Paul Carraway
1872-74	Henry H. Gibbons
1875-77	Richard S. Webb, M. J. Hunt
1878	Richard S. Webb, R. B. Beaman
(Tar River Circuit - 8 Churches)	
1879-82	William H. Moore
1883	R. G. Barrett, J. T. Finlayson
1884	John T. Gibbs
1885-88	Joseph J. Renn
(Franklinton Circuit - 4 Churches)	
1889-90	Edward Pell
1891-94	Nathan H. D. Wilson
1895-96	William S. Davis
1897-1900	George Bagcum Perry
1901-04	John H. Shore
1905-08	Nereus E. Coltrane
1909-12	William W. Rose (Died in Service February 5, 1913)
	William A. Cade (Superintendent)
1913	Asa J. Parker
1914-16	James H. Buffaloe
1917-19	Timothy A. Sykes
(Franklinton Charge - 2 Churches)	
1920	Solon A. Cotton
1921	Robah H. Bumpas
1922	Orren W. Dowd
1923	Edward H. Davis
(Franklinton Circuit - 3 Churches: Youngsville, Wesley's, Rock Springs)	
*1924	V. A. Royall



WESLEY'S CHAPEL PASTORS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NAME</u>
(Franklinton Circuit: Name changed to Youngsville Circuit)	
*1929	R. R. Branton
(Youngsville Circuit Disbanded - 1930)	
(Franklinton Charge - 2 Churches)	
1930-32	Charles F. Read
1933-35	Elma D. Weathers
1936-48	Seymour E. Mercer
1949-51	Paul Carruth
1951-52	Sidney T. Davis
1953-55	Walter N. McDonald
1956-58	Albert F. Fisher
1959-60	William A. Crow
1961-65	Lawrence S. Bridges
1966	Arnold Pope
1967-68	Don Lee Harris
1969-72	J. Earl Richardson
1973-74	Paul Leland
1974-75	Johnnie Joyce
1976-77	Danny Allen
1977-81	Norman Knight
(Franklinton Charge - 3 Churches: Franklinton, Wesley's, Ebenezer)	
1981-83	Clay Smith
1983-85	Geraldine Ingram
1985-86	Randy Wall
1986-88	Michael A. Davis

\*Special Thanks to Mrs. Vivian Mitchell, Secretary to the Bishop, for this information.