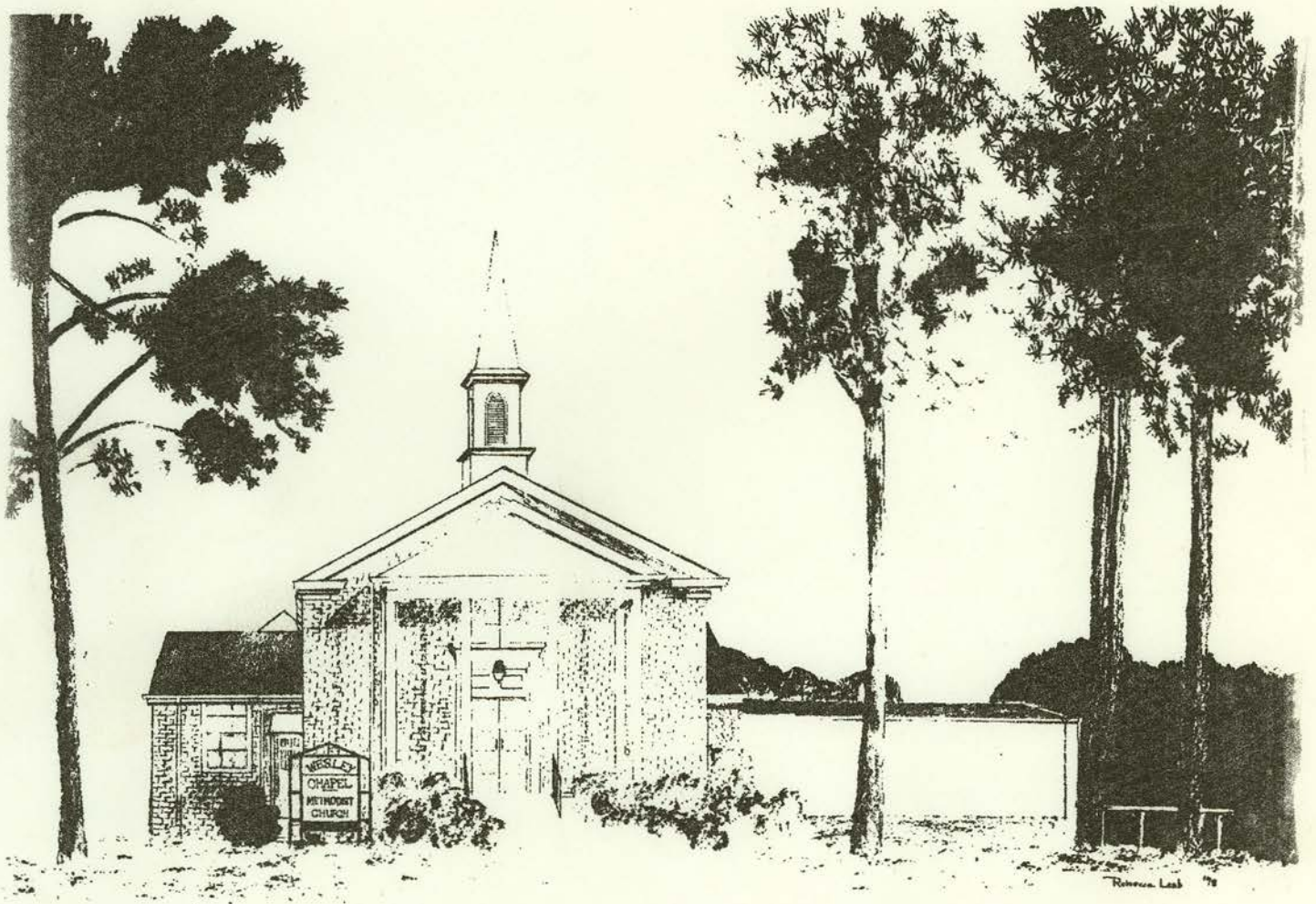


Wesley's Chapel

United Methodist Church



History

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WESLEY'S CHAPEL

Trinity Methodist Church in Elizabethtown is the mother church of Wesley's Chapel. Some of her members in this community started having prayer meetings and Sunday School several years before the formal appointment of a pastor was made. Mr. Jacob Johnson, a member of Trinity, along with others from this immediate area, appeared before the Elizabeth Circuit Conference and requested the services of a minister. The appointment was made in 1878 and Reverend J. T. Kendall served as first pastor. This newly organized unit of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, used Scotch Springs School House as a meeting place.

The school house was a long cabin and the pews were split logs with blocks for legs. Former member, Mr. James A. Gooden, recorded his memories of attending his first Sunday School in a lean-to room which had been added to the original cabin. Prayer meeting and Sunday School were held each week and preaching once a month in the school building for approximately twelve years.

In a deed dated July 11, 1891, J. W. Shaw and others, deeded to Jacob Johnson and trustees, one acre of land on the north west side of the public road leading from Elizabethtown to Bladenboro (Now NC 242) four and three quarters miles south of Elizabethtown. The men of the church gave the timber and labor to build the first Wesley's Chapel Church, as it was not named, on this acre. First services were held in this building in 1892 with Reverend W. H. Townsend as minister.

The building was rectangular with two front doors, one leading to the gentlemen's seats on the left and the other to the ladies seats on the right. Simple straight backed pews were hand made from 1½" x 14" boards. (Some of these pews remain in good condition today.) Two large kerosene lamps with brass shades suspended from the ceiling; four smaller lamps pinned to the two side walls; a lamp on the pulpit and the organ provided

the lighting. Heat was provided by a large wood-burning stove in the center of the sanctuary. Although not underpinned, the building had "a good tight floor." The simple, unpainted building and furnishings were appropriate for the time and place.

It was in this building that the following reports were made by Reverend George T. Simmons:

Statistical and Financial Exhibit for 1900

Statistical

Number of members at beginning of the year	44
" " " added during the year	<u>1</u>
Total	45
Number of members removed during the year	3
Number of members at end of the year	<u>42</u>
" Children baptized	1

FINANCIAL

	Assessed	Paid	Deficit
Presiding Elder and Pastor	\$30.00	\$21.57	\$ 8.43
Conference Collections	15.00	14.13	.87
Paid by the church	12.42		
" by S.S. Miss. Soc.	<u>1.71</u>		
Repairing and Furnishing Parsonage		3.00	
Incidental Expenses		2.00	
Orphan Asylum		.20	
Sunday School Supplies		<u>4.00</u>	
TOTAL		\$44.90	
Average per member \$1.06			

Steward's Report

To First Church Conference at Wesley's Chapel 1901:

Your steward begs leave to submit the following report to wit:

Circuit assessed for salary and traveling expenses for the Pastor	\$ 440.00
Assessment for Presiding Elder	70.00
	<hr/>
Total	\$ 510.00

Of this amount the sum of \$30.00 has been assessed to this church, and I desire instructions as to how the same shall be raised.

T. W. Johnson, Steward

Financially the church was having its problems, but spiritually a good report could be made by Reverend Simmons at the Third Church Conference, 1901: "When our last conference was held, 22nd August, we were in the midst of a protracted meeting, which resulted in thirty-seven professions of conversion, one reclamation, a goodly number of sanctifications and fourteen accessions, as follows, viz."

By Baptism

George Graham Gooden, Seth Edwin Gooden, Steenie Enolia Gooden, Luther Homer Johnson, Ira Lee Johnson, Alonza Ross Johnson, Edith May Gooden and Charles Russ.

By Vow

Rosa Hettie Johnson, George Clayton Johnson, Mary Mildred Johnson, James Bertram Johnson, John Wesley Shaw, Martha Jane Shaw..."

The membership was growing but names were also being stricken from the roll as indicated by entries in 1902. Two gentlemen were requested "to show cause why they should not be dropped for nonattendance." Their names were stricken at the next church conference. One member "having made and sold intoxicating liquor wine from grapes was allowed to withdraw December 25, 1902 in preference to a trial."

The Quarterly Conference minutes dated February 8, 1920 state that Wesleys Chapel is planning to build a new church. Authority was given to the trustees to sell the church property and buy another site for a new building. A deed dated July 31, 1920 from William H. Regan and his wife Annie Regan to T.W. Johnson, B. F. Johnson, and J. A. Johnson, conveyed one acre of land to the trustees of Wesleys Chapel Church for the site of a new building. This second church was located four miles south west of Elizabethtown on what is now Rural Paved Road 1150, the site where the Byron Gooden home now stands.

Pastor H. L. Brown's report dated October 16, 1920 states, "the new church is under construction." Again, the men of the church did nearly all the work and donated most of the materials. Much of the lumber was shipped by train to Elizabethtown from the Pee Dee Islands in South Carolina where Mr. George Gooden and Mr. Austin Gooden had a sawmill in operation. The first service was held in 1921 with the building not yet completed, but in usable condition. Reverend S. W. Phillips was pastor.

This church was larger than the first but it was also informal and suitable for the congregation and the times. It had only one large double door (ladies and gentlemen were now allowed to sit together) which opened directly into the sanctuary. A vestibule at the entrance and Sunday school classrooms to the right and left of the vestibule were added in 1929. The lighting was by kerosene lamps and the heating was by large wood-burning stove. The floor was tightly laid dressed boards, uncarpeted. During 1923, Mr. Sammy Johnson headed work on new more elaborate pews with curved backs. The church was painted inside and outside. Dedication of the completed building was led by Reverend H. E. Lance in June 1925.

This second Wesleys Chapel Church is fondly remembered by many of our present members. Mr. Elmer Gooden recalls wearing his "Sunday overalls" and going barefoot to Sunday School there.

Several members recall walking to the church for Children's Day programs organized by Aunt Laura Johnson.

Wesleys Chapel was on a circuit with five other churches: Trinity, Clarkton, Purdie, Singletary, and Union (later named Bluefield). This limited the number of preaching services each month to two, however, the strong local lay leadership kept many fine programs going in this new church. In 1930, the Epworth League was formed and Maxine Butler is recorded as the first president. Mrs. Egbert Daniel is listed as chairman of the Sunday School Missionary Society in 1930. The Sunday School Report stated that it was "doing as well as could be expected."

The following names appear again and again in the church records during the time the second Wesleys Chapel Church was in use: John Adams, W. F. Daniel, Mrs. Daisy Daniel, James A. Gooden, George Gooden, Mrs. George Gooden, Byron Gooden, B.F. Johnson, J. Douglas Johnson, Clarence Johnson, Ira Johnson, J. S. Johnson, A. R. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Miss Ruby Johnson, Edwin Johnson, T. W. Johnson, Samuel Johnson, and D. C. Singletary. Under the leadership of these ladies and gentlemen, the Sunday School grew and in 1929 classrooms were partitioned on each side of the entrance to the sanctuary at a cost of \$390.00. In 1947 three classrooms were added behind the chancel area at a cost of \$1,300.00. In 1949-50 two single classroom buildings were erected.

Even though the name Laura Gooden Johnson does not frequently appear in the conference reports, she was unsurpassed in her dedication to her Savior and His Church. Children and youth were drawn to her. Her response was to teach them, sing with them, play the organ for them, pray for them, and most of all to love them. Her enthusiasm and dedication, ending only at her death on February 14, 1978, significantly touched the lives of three generations.

While the minister's schedule was almost impossible to meet, the records indicate that many spring and summer revivals were held at Wesleys Chapel and with good results. Reverend N.P. Edens reported a revival held in the spring of 1933 in which prayer services were held in every home of the Wesleys and Trinity congregations. The following were received into church membership: Horace Edwin Butler, Charles Vernon Butler, Roy Dale Adams, Dora Louise Johnson, Shelton C. Shaw, Jewel Bates, Wilton Johnson, Ruby Lee Johnson, John Alexander (Lexie) Gooden, David Theodore Gooden, Mr. and Mrs. John Adams.

In September 1938, Reverend C. W. Barbee reported having a revival in connection with Vacation Church School during the summer. Reverend M. C. Dunn, a visiting minister preached the revival and the following were received into membership: Mrs. Byron Gooden, Hilda Britt, Merle Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Edna Wray Daniel, Gerald Johnson, and Annie Laurie Ellis. A 1941 revival held by Reverend Barbee resulted in the membership of Ruby Frances Campbell, Julia E. Campbell, Norma Gray Johnson, Mary Gooden, Stuart Gooden, Walton Daniel, and Terry Lynwood Britt.

In 1940 the records show that \$35.00 was spent to wire Wesleys Chapel for electricity and in 1950 an oil space heater was installed in the sanctuary. Gas space heaters were used in the Sunday School Classrooms.

The Women's Society of Christian Service (now United Methodist Women) was formed in 1948. Mrs. Anna Glenn and others from Trinity in Elizabethtown met with the ladies in the home of Mrs. Elmer Gooden for the organizational meeting. The society has been in service since that time and continues to be a strong working unit within the church.

In January 1943, Reverend C. W. Barbee reported that the Elizabeth Charge had thirty members serving in the armed forces.

World War II brought with it an economic boom and the so called "war babies" which would hasten Wesleys move into a new and larger third church building.

A deed dated July 27, 1955 from Marvin Daniel and his wife, Juanita C. Daniel, conveyed to Wesleys Chapel Church Association 2.23 acres of land upon which the present church and parsonage now stand. The Daniels donated this acreage free of charge to the church.

A building committee consisting of Bobby Simmons, Marvin Daniel, and Clyde Johnson was elected and a modern brick building was built during 1955-56 at a cost of \$43,000.00 Adrian Adams served as treasurer.

The original building at this third location consisted of a vestibule with a balcony above, the sanctuary, a fellowship hall, kitchen, two restrooms, and five classrooms in addition to two recessed at the back of the sanctuary.

New oak furniture for the chancel area had been donated as a memorial to David T. Gooden by his wife and sons, Helen M. Gooden, Michael and Steven Gooden, in 1952 while still in the old building. Some matching pews were bought by the congregation in 1952. With the addition of several more pews, the new sanctuary was beautifully furnished. The average attendance was 90 - 100.

Reverend Carl R. Newton was pastor at the time the new building was occupied in 1956. Mr. Newton married while on this charge. Suzanne L. Newton, his wife, directed the choir and often served as pianist.

The following names appear frequently in the church conference records as officers and leaders during the 1950's and 1960's: Lawrence Nunnery as treasurer for many years, Edna Wray Nunnery, Jesse Inman, Mr. and Mrs. Lexie Gooden, Billy

and Mildred Simmons, Audrey Adams, Mr. and Mrs. George Inman, Mrs. Egbert Daniel, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Britt, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Gooden, Bobby and Hilda Simmons, Lennon Singletary, Mrs. Jane Ross, Charles Lewis, Mrs. Evelyn Gooden, Joyce Dowless and Dennis Johnson.

In 1959, under the ministry of Reverend L. D. Sproull, the official board of Wesleys Chapel voted to become a station appointment the following conference year. With Bobby Simmons, Marvin Daniel, and Clyde Johnson again serving as the building committee, a new parsonage was built at a cost of \$17,000.00. Reverend and Mrs. Sproull and baby Ann took possession in June 1960. Wesleys Chapel finally had a full-time minister, and a full program, led by a very energetic pastor whose favorite expression was, "Wesleys Chapel is on its way up!" Mr. Sproull set out most of the beautiful Dogwoods and azaleas which bloom around the parsonage each spring.

Mrs. Sproull (Jean) was a talented and dedicated musician. She worked many hours with the choir.

The Sproulls had been reared in Pennsylvania. During the winter of his second year on this station (1962), Mr. Sproull transferred to a pastorate in Ohio in order to be nearer his home. Reverend R. R. Knowles served as supply pastor for the remainder of the conference year. Mr. and Mrs. Knowles were newly-weds that year. Mrs. Knowles (Jaxie) won hearts with her vivacious personality and beautiful voice. She also directed the choir.

Reverend Clarence Warren served Wesleys Chapel for two years. Mr. Warren was blind. He prepared his sermons each week in braille. With the help of a loving Mrs. Ruby (his wife) his ministry contributed to the continuing spiritual and material growth of the church.

Reverend Charles Eakin spent a year (1965-1966) at Wesleys Chapel totally involved in physically helping (painting, setting out shrubbery, woodcrafting candle sticks and other objects for the altar) and working with the young people. They would gather at the parsonage, bake as many as two dozen pound cakes, then go into town for a bake sale. His work with the youth was outstanding as his two shadows for that year, J. J. Johnson and Victor Johnson, will testify.

It was evident almost from the beginning that the new building did not have adequate Sunday School facilities. In 1967-68, under the ministry of Reverend Herman N. Ward, and a building committee of George Inman, Bobby Simmons, and Stuart Gooden, an addition of six classrooms, two large restrooms, a kitchen, and a fellowship hall was built. The old fellowship hall and kitchen were renovated into classrooms. The sanctuary was remodeled, adding a split chancel, new windows, and carpeting. The entire unit was air conditioned. New altar ware, a baptismal font, and a lecturn were donated to the church as memorials completing the furnishings.

Reverend Ward was not physically strong, however, he was highly motivated and a good leader. He enjoyed order and beauty, and desired that the Lord's house be beautiful and dignified. Mrs. Ward was his strong right arm and supported faithfully in his ministry.

In the fall of 1970, while serving his fourth year at Wesleys Chapel, Reverend Herman Ward died. His funeral was conducted by District Superintendent Reverend Clyde McCarver here and he was buried at his home in Columbus County.

The vacancy left by Mr. Ward was filled by two men. Reverend James A. Starnes was working at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville and he was appointed to complete the conference year. Mr. Marvin Daniel was employed by the Administrative Board to serve as lay minister in the community while Mr.

Starnes continued his work at the college and did the preaching services. The Starnes lived in the parsonage nearly two years and their son, Cannon, was born during that time.

Reverend and Mrs. Gordon Allen, Jr. served Wesley's Chapel for one year (1972-73). Mr. Allen published the first church directory and initiated a Wednesday morning prayer meeting that was particularly enjoyed by many of our ladies.

An enthusiastic Reverend Eekie Lancaster designated stewardship and youth as the two areas of concentration for his ministry at Wesley's Chapel. The result has been the most complete and enriching program the church has ever experienced. Upon his arrival in June 1973, he put the congregation to work. Every classroom was painted, papered and carpeted before his first year was completed.

New youth groups were organized: His Children, Grades 1-6 and the Charity Kids, Grades 7-12. United Methodist men organized and the Golden Nuggets began meeting once each week for lunch. The first bus and a van became necessary to carry on the extensive program.

Tennis courts were poured, play ground equipment bought, and a picnic shelter built.

With attendance (200+) and membership nearly doubled, Reverend Lancaster and a building committee composed of Michael Simmons, Chairman, David Cox, Brenda Gooden, Nancy Phillips, and Bobby Simmons led the largest single undertaking in the century the church has been in existence. A new multi-purpose building composed of a fellowship-gymnasium area with a stage, a large kitchen, eight classrooms, four restrooms, and two storage rooms was completed in 1977 at a cost of approximately \$130,000.00. The Sanctuary was redecorated and the vestibule enlarged. New cushioned and upholstered choir seats were purchased. The vestibule was tastefully furnished as a memorial to Reverend Herman N. Ward.

Mrs. Lancaster (Shirley) was employed as first full-time church secretary and program coordinator at the beginning of Reverend Lancaster's ministry at Wesleys Chapel. There is no way to place a monetary value on the work she has done in keeping the total program of the church moving. Wesleys Chapel has been chosen "Church of the Year" in the North Carolina Conference twice in the last five years in large part because of the highly professional manner that Mrs. Lancaster and others have presented the fine program to the conference committee. Wesleys Chapel does not have a minister only, it has a ministering family. Woody, Leslie, and Kip are involved in every phase of the work along with their parents.

Sunday School Conference was held in conjunction with the Centennial Celebration at Wesleys Chapel on October 22, 1978. Purdie Methodist Church hosted the first Sunday School Conference in the fall of 1889. Abbottsburg, Bladen Springs, Purdie, Singletary, Union, Trinity, and Wesley's Chapel were participants. This event, whose purpose was to increase interest in the Sunday Schools and create fellowship among the churches on the Charge, became an annual affair with much emphasis on choral music and noontime feasting. As churches on the charge have become stations, fewer churches have participated; however, this event is unique to Bladen County and hopefully this inter-church celebration of good music and fellowship will remain an on-going tradition.

Good music has always been a part of the ministry at Wesleys Chapel. Uncle Frank Johnson led the singing for many years. Aunt Laura Johnson, Mrs. Mollie Singletary, Ruby Johnson Campen, Esther Britt Inman, Daphne Butler, Frances Shaw Gooden, Jeanne Gooden Upton, Dottie Adams, Susan Gooden, Betty Tatum, and Nancy Haney have all served as organists or pianists through the years. Length of service, quality of performance and dependability awards should go to Mrs. Lois Daniel's two girls, Carolyn D. Scoggins and Wanda Daniel. Violet Daniel, Brenda Gooden, and Bill Horchler have been outstanding choir directors.

Beautiful choral music was a large part of the Centennial Celebration for the Church. District Superintendent Reverend James Auman gave a devotional address and Mrs. Carl C. Campbell (Wanda Suggs), Secretary of Bladen County Historical Society presented a history of Wesleys Chapel. A display of very old pictures was set up in the fellowship hall along with a pew from the first church building and other items that brought back fond memories. The "Church of the Year Books" were on display and the Memorial Register was brought up to date and also displayed.

A delicious meal with a huge birthday cake decorated by Mrs. Eloise S. Johnson, was followed by the Annual Sunday School Conference in the afternoon.

For many years Wesleys Chapel was a family church with nearly all members related either by blood or by marriage. As times and populations have changed the make up of the congregation has broadened. We have gained many beautiful new members. There is no way for the church to go except to continue to grow in a positive way. To quote one of our present-day saints, Mildred Johnson Gooden, who has remembered each of the church buildings: "From a log school house we have come to this today-- by hard work and the Lord's help!"

CHARTER MEMBERS OF WESLEYS CHAPEL CHURCH

Jacob Johnson and Lucy Ann Johnson
Thomas W. Johnson and Ellen V. Johnson
John S. Johnson and Sarah A. Johnson
Charlie N. Johnson
Lloyd A. Johnson
Benjamin Franklin Johnson and Carrie G. Johnson
Rachel C. Johnson
Mary E. Dowless
Martha J. White
Nathan Henry Johnson
William H. Shaw and Eliza Dowless Shaw
John W. Shaw and Florence Shaw
A. F. White
Archie W. Shaw and Rachel Edwards Shaw
Alexander W. Gooden and Lizzie B. Gooden
David James Gooden and Mary Frances Kelly Gooden
Martha Pone (colored)
M. A. Guyton (Martha) Johnson
Amanda D. Guyton
Margaret Ann Shaw (Peggie Anne)
Mrs. Nancy A. Davis
Mrs. Mary Ann Gooden (Suggs)
Amanda Cain
Mrs. Annie C. Dowless
William B. Guyton
Rufus H. Dowless
Ida Shaw McGill
Blanch Shaw (Gooden)
Margaret Eva Davis (Smith) Mrs. Maggie Smith
Edgar E. Davis

EARLY MEMBERS - NOT CHARTER MEMBERS

Mrs. Katy Gooden (McEwel)	Annie Maria Johnson (Sellers)
Alma Frances Johnson (Suggs)	Rebecca Munta (Johnson)
Helen R. Johnson (Suggs)	Viola J. Shaw (Lewis)
Mary Elizabeth Shaw (Hayes)	Mary J. Shaw (Thaggard)
Daisy C. Gooden (Daniel)	Carrie L. White
Georgia White	Rich Dowless
Tom Benson	Jim King (J. W.)
Susie Flowers Gillespie (Johnson)	

This list was furnished by Mrs. Mildred Johnson Gooden
October, 1978.