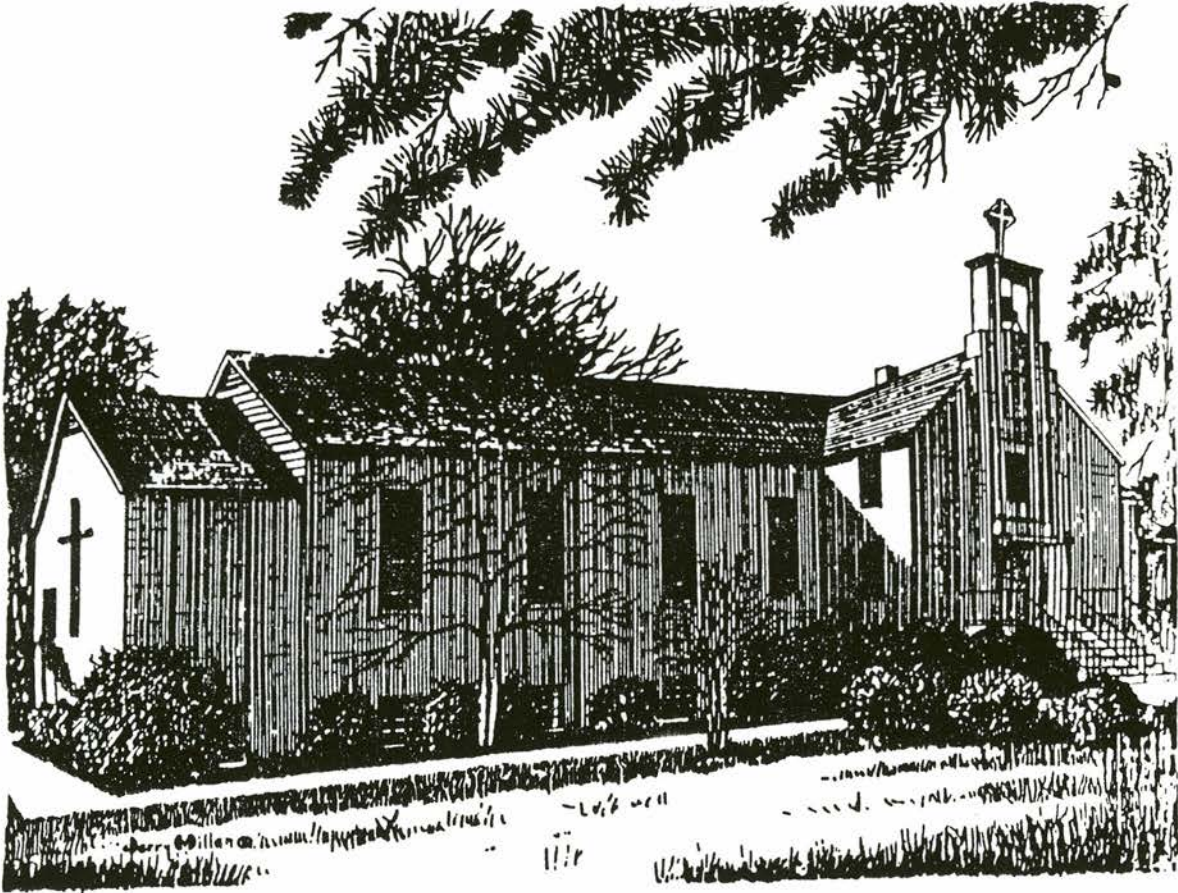


Westover United Methodist Church



300 Powell Drive
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606
Church - 851-4431
Parsonage - 851-4545

PREFACE

It seems most appropriate in celebrating the forty-sixth anniversary of the founding of Westover United Methodist Church that someone should compile the historical facts in the life of our church so we can reflect on and appreciate our wonderful heritage as we celebrate the note burning of the mortgage on our church in the fall of 1991.

We are sure each of you could add some of your special memories to this history, and it is with a spirit of humbleness that the church historical committee accepted the challenge of compiling the information they have searched to find, as a complete history that has not been recorded over the years.

We wish we could recognize and mention the names of all those who have so generously given of their time, talents, gifts, money, love, support and service to God and the Christian ministry of our church in our community. That, of course, is not possible, as so many people have been involved; therefore, this history will focus on the significant dates in the life of our church, the ministers who have faithfully served us, and give some financial background.

Compiled by: Janet Burke, September 1991

Researched by: Westover United Methodist Church Historical Committee

Edith Highsmith, Chairperson
Virginia Hewitt
Margaret Holleman
Beulah Dickerson
Lydia Waters
Frances Nowell
Lottie Russell

CHURCH HISTORY

Westover Methodist Church was organized October 7, 1945, after the Reverend Howard McLamb, then pastor of Fairmont Methodist Church, visited and solicited members in the Westover Community who were interested in having a Methodist Church of their own.

On May 16, 1945, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Erwin King, the following persons met with the Reverend Howard McLamb: Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Dickerson, Mr. and Mrs. Erwin King, and Mr. C. M. Harrell. Led by Mr. McLamb, plans were made to start a Sunday School the following Sunday, May 20, 1945, at the Mt. Vernon-Goodwin School building. There were fifty-nine present for the organization of the Sunday School. The Sunday School was held for a few weeks in the afternoon and then changed to Sunday morning.

On July 8, 1945, Mr. McLamb took a week of his vacation and devoted it to visiting in the community and holding a revival in the school building. A love offering was taken up at the end of the revival as a token of appreciation for Mr. McLamb's interest and work in the community, but was given back by him to start a Church Lot Fund.

The Sunday School at this time had an enrollment of seventy-five. Interest was growing rapidly, and Mr. McLamb was asked to help in the organization of a church, which he did.

Interest in building a church grew rapidly and on October 7, 1945, the church was organized by the Reverend H. B. Porter, Superintendent of the Raleigh District.

In forming the new church, the Reverend Mr. Porter read from the Methodist Discipline: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinances. The local church is a society of persons who have professed their faith and have joined together in the

fellowship of a Christian congregation in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love."

At the business session of the new church, an offering was taken to bring the building lot fund to \$100, and it was announced that the District Church Location Committee would meet Tuesday to aid in selecting the building site.

A Quarterly Conference was called, and the following officers were elected:

Stewards

Mr. C. H. Highsmith
Mr. W. H. Dickerson
Mrs. W. R. Hobby
Mrs. H. G. Edwards
Mrs. J. C. Carter
Mr. Erwin King, Chairman

Trustees

Mr. W. R. Highsmith
Mr. T. L. Kidd
Mrs. J. R. Markham
Mrs. W. E. Smith
Mr. J. N. Gary, Chairman

Mr. W. H. Dickerson, Superintendent of Sunday School
Mrs. H. G. Edwards, Treasurer

Thirty-one charter members were present when the church was organized. The charter membership period was extended for ninety days, and at the end of this time there were forty-nine members.

Charter Members:

Mr. and Mrs. Erwin King
Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Highsmith
Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Dickerson
Mr. George Dickerson
Miss Janet Dickerson
Mrs. W. R. Hobby
Mrs. H. G. Edwards
Mr. J. N. Gary
Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Highsmith
Mrs. T. L. Kidd
Mrs. J. R. Markham
Mrs. W. E. Smith
Mr. Raymond McGhee
Miss Louise Austin
Miss Lora Mae Austin
Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Massengill, Jr.

Miss Virginia Dare Hobby
Mrs. R. M. Smith
Mrs. H. C. Garner
Mr. Thomas King
Mrs. Irene Hamilton
Mrs. Cecil Stancil
Mrs. Hickman O'Neal
Mrs. B. J. Abbott
Mrs. C. E. Watkins
Mrs. J. C. Carter

The following were taken in within the ninety-day period that was extended for charter members:

Mr. Felton Austin
Mr. J. C. Austin
Mr. and Mrs. G. J. Cornell
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Finch
Mr. Thomas Highsmith
Mrs. R. W. Holland
Miss Carolyn Holland
Miss Bonnie Holland
Mrs. W. H. Lee
Miss Ann Lee
Miss Jane Lee
Miss Barbara Lassiter
Miss Betty Jane Powell
Miss Joyce Seagroves
Miss Joycie Jean Smith
Miss Mabel Wynn

When the Annual Conference met in November, 1945, they sent the Reverend Herman S. Winberry, then a ministerial student at Duke, to serve as the first pastor of the newly-organized Westover Methodist Church. Westover and Pleasant Grove Churches were on a charge together in the beginning until Westover could support a full-time minister.

The Church and Sunday School continued to grow, and in June, 1946 the congregation decided to buy a lot in Westover on Hillsboro Road on which to build a church.

The Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized April 11, 1946 by Mrs. S. W. Buchanan, who at that time was the District Secretary of the W.S.C.S. There were five ladies

present for the organization, and they elected Mrs. Erwin King as first president. The Pledge for Missions for the remainder of the year was \$28.00.

In June, 1946 the first Vacation Bible School was held, and Mrs. W. R. Hobby served as dean of the school. Eighty pupils were enrolled, and the school was a very successful one.

At the end of the first conference year there were 74 church members, and the Sunday School enrollment was 164. Assets of \$2,500 were recorded.

The Reverend Herman Winberry was sent back to Westover for the second year. The church continued to prosper, and the highlight of the second year was the work started for the young people. The Methodist Board of Missions sent Miss Dorothy Jervey to Westover for two months to work with the young people and to conduct classes for the Sunday School teachers. Mr. Winberry stated in his conference report that "there is a fine spirit of friendliness and cooperation at Westover Church."

The Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized in the summer of 1947, with Miss Virginia Dare Hobby as the first president. The organization grew rapidly and by the end of the year there were about twenty-five members.

The Reverend Roderick Dail held a revival at Westover during the year, and the church's second year ended with a church membership of 100 and a Sunday School enrollment of 193. Assets of the church were \$4,000.

In November, 1947 the Reverend W. N. McDonald of Durham, then a ministerial student at Duke, came to Westover Methodist Church. He succeeded the Reverend Herman Winberry, who was appointed to Henderson. The Reverend Mr. McDonald left June 24, 1948.

The District Superintendent sent the Reverend Hollis Huston, a graduate student at Duke, to serve the church for the remainder of the conference year.

One of the main concerns during the one-year pastorate of Mr. Huston was the selling of the church on lot on Hillsboro Road and buying one that was more centrally located between Westover and Western Boulevard. The congregation sold the lot on Hillsboro Road, June 27, 1948. The District Church Location Committee met at Mt. Vernon-Goodwin School and chose the lot for the proposed Westover Church. This lot was on the corner of Powell Drive and Carolina Avenue, and by July 27, 1948 the lot was bought and was being cleared so that work could be started on the basement. On April 3, 1949 at 3:00 p.m. the ground-breaking ceremony was held, and work on the basement was begun immediately. Mr. G. J. Cornell was elected chairman of the Building Committee.

The first Official Board was organized in 1948 with Mr. Erwin King as chairman. At the end of this conference year of 1948, membership in the church was 99, Church School enrollment was 195, and assets were \$4,500.

In August, 1949, the Reverend Hollis Huston, having completed his Ph.D at Duke, accepted an offer to teach at Amherst College, and once again the church was without a pastor before conference time.

The Reverend H. B. Porter, District Superintendent, had the task of finding a new minister to take over a young church in the midst of a building program. The Reverend George C. Megill, a ministerial student at Duke, was sent to be the fourth pastor of our church.

In September, 1949 Mr. Megill assumed pastoral leadership, and Westover Church experienced a rapid growth. The year 1949 ended with a church membership at 116, a Church School enrollment of 116, and assets of \$4,500.

In January, 1950 a Young Adult Class was organized and the growth was rapid. Mrs. Greg Trosper was the first teacher, and Mrs. Julia Johnston was her assistant. Mr. Bill Lampley was the first president of the class. Membership soon grew to 100.

At the close of the conference year 1950, much progress could be reported. There were now 118 church members and 153 enrolled in the Church School. The church indebtedness was \$5,000 with a property value of \$11,000.

The Reverend George Megill was sent back to Westover for a second year. The building of the church was nearing completion.

The first service was held in the new church on October 14, 1951, with a homecoming and dinner. The Reverend Howard McLamb, who had worked so diligently to organize the church, delivered the morning message. The Reverend Herman Winberry, the first pastor of the church, was the afternoon speaker.

Then to climax a very fine year for the church, the Reverend Bill Garrison held a revival in the new Westover Methodist Church.

At the end of the year 1951 there were 135 church members and 157 on the Church School roll. We had a church value of \$50,000 and an indebtedness of \$25,000.

Mr. Megill once again returned to Westover, and much work was accomplished in the finishing of the Church School rooms and the kitchen.

The young people of the church started a fund-raising campaign to put an organ in the sanctuary. When half the amount needed had been raised, the church agreed to help finish the payment, and the organ was installed in 1952.

At the end of the 1952 conference year, the church membership was 155 and Church School enrollment was 245. We had paid on the indebtedness \$2,373; balance due \$26,000; and church property value was \$56,500.

The Reverend Mr. Megill was appointed for the fourth year to serve the Westover Church, now to be the full-time pastor, as the 1952 Annual Conference had taken Pleasant Grove Church from the Westover Charge.

In June, 1953 a special Quarterly Conference was held, and the congregation voted to purchase the lot adjoining the church property that was for sale. The lot was bought June 16, 1953, and the six-room parsonage was started immediately. Six months later, on December 15, 1953, the Megills moved into the new parsonage.

Westover Church had its first opportunity to broadcast their services over WNAO for the month of August, 1953, with Mr. Megill doing the preaching at the morning services.

The Methodist Men of the church had been organized for some time, but had not received their official charter. On December 15, 1953, Walter Anderson from the Edenton Street Church, spoke to them at a banquet at the Community Center and presented them with a charter. Biff Abbott was first president of the group.

At the end of the conference year the church had gained in membership greatly and now had a membership of 191 members and a Sunday School enrollment of 248. Paid on indebtedness was \$2,432, with a balance of \$30,150; and property value of \$70,500.

The Reverend Mr. Megill was sent back to serve Westover for the fifth year at the 1953 Conference.

On January 28, 1954, pews were installed in the church. Until that time we had been using chairs for church services.

The Woman's Society of Christian Service for several years had been giving \$1,000 per year toward the building program of the church. This year they decided to take on the job of remodeling the kitchen instead of giving the \$1,000.

On July 1, 1954 Mr. Megill was appointed by the Bishop and Cabinet to go to Hamlet to serve Fellowship Church, which had been organized a few months before by the Reverend Howard McLamb, who had helped organize Westover Church a few years earlier. Later in Mr. Megill's ministry, he and his wife, June, served as missionaries in Brazil. Westover Church helped provide missionary salary support for them.

This left the church at Westover again in the middle of a conference year without a pastor. The Reverend Grady Dawson, superintendent of the Raleigh District, sent the Reverend Paul D. Houston to serve the remaining five months of the conference year.

Soon after Mr. Houston came, another Sunday School class was organized for the younger married couples. It was named the Builders Class. Hank Wilkinson was the first teacher. Later in his career Hank became an ordained minister in the North Carolina Conference.

At the end of the conference year, half under Mr. Megill and the other under Mr. Houston, the report was as follows:

284 on Sunday School roll; 230 church membership; \$2,531 paid on church indebtedness, with balance of \$27,160; value of church property \$75,000.

In 1955 the W.S.C.S. had the concrete walks laid around the church, and Buchanan's Nursery donated and planted beautiful shrubbery around the church.

The year 1955 ended with a nice increase in Sunday School attendance reaching 304; church membership was 256; \$2,549 was paid on church debt; balance of \$24,000; church property value \$75,000.

The Conference of November, 1955 sent Mr. Houston back to Westover Church for another year.

Douglas Franklin was elected for the summer months to help with the recreation of the church. He was already serving as organist and choir director.

The Reverend Mr. Houston left June 12, 1956 to go back to the West Virginia Conference, as this was his home.

At the Annual Conference in June, 1956, the Reverend R. H. Caudill was appointed to Westover Church. Mr. Caudill served until 1959 when he was appointed to the East Rockingham Church.

The Reverend Robert H. Eason followed Mr. Caudill, and he served a three-year pastorate and then was appointed to Roanoke Rapids. Mr. Eason later transferred to the Virginia Conference.

The Reverend Ralph L. Fleming, Jr. succeeded Mr. Eason in June, 1962. Under the pastoral leadership of Mr. Fleming, our lovely Educational Building was constructed adjacent to the church building. A weekday kindergarten program was started at our church in 1967 during Mr. Fleming's administration. Carol Watson was the first director and teacher.

The Reverend Kermit L. Braswell succeeded Mr. Fleming in June, 1969. During Mr. Braswell's pastorate, the sanctuary of the church was air conditioned, along with other capital improvements. The present parsonage was purchased May 17, 1973, under Mr. Braswell's leadership, for \$44,000. Mr. Braswell served Westover Church until June, 1975, when he was appointed to Queen Street Church in Kinston.

The Reverend Kenneth B. Sexton succeeded Mr. Braswell in June, 1975. During Mr. Sexton's pastorate, sanctuary improvements were made, such as pew cushions, as well as general capital improvements. A new organ was purchased and installed. The church membership was 734, and total assets approximately \$500,000.

The Reverend Vassar W. Jones was appointed to Westover Church in 1988 and served for two years. During 1988-89 a sizeable group of Westover Church members chose to leave Westover, but under the guidance and dedicated leadership of Mr. Jones, the church experienced

a new and dynamic spirit as new leaders emerged. The United Methodist Men's organization saw much growth during Mr. Jones' pastorate, and his ministry to our church had a positive and lasting effect on Westover Church. He retired from the ministry in 1990 and lives in Roxboro.

The Reverend Robert S. Shields was appointed to Westover Church in July, 1990. The following is a synopsis of our church year-- July, 1990 through June, 1991:

Our identity as a United Methodist Church has been more boldly proclaimed with the highlighting of our United Methodist symbol of the Cross and Flame on the Powell Drive side of our sanctuary building.

We have adopted a new form of church government, called the Administrative Council, and most all church meetings are held on the same night of the week, and scheduled well in advance.

We met our financial obligations in full, and we expect to be debt free in the fall of 1991. We look forward to our "note-burning" celebration!

New doors have been added to our sanctuary building, a new heating/cooling system is in the process of being installed, and many people now park on a paved drive-way, that is paid for and was dreamed about for so long! A spacious storage shed has been added to our parsonage.

We have seen growth in our Young Adult Sunday School Class (Trinity Class), our Chancel Choir, our Vacation Bible School, and we continue to be blessed by frequent visitors at our services of worship.

We have come together for Sunday evening Bible studies and sharing groups on a regular basis.

We are excited about the addition to our Preschool program. This year marked the addition of classes for the hearing impaired, and they have interacted with our regular pre-school classes to the mutual advantage of all.

Progress has been made in our attempts to bring church rolls up to date. Thirteen new members united with our fellowship this church year.

Church membership - January 1, 1991 - was 792.

Value of church properties -- in excess of \$1,500,000.

Through the years fund-raising projects such as plays, gardens, suppers, bazaars, and the State Fair Booth have always been a vital part of our church history. The church still successfully operates a fair booth each year to raise funds. One of the most memorable fund raisers in the early life of our church was a demonstration by church members of dollars taped in a line and laid in a line of progress between Mt. Vernon-Goodwin School and our proposed church site, for the purpose of raising additional funds.

The bell in the edifice of our church has a special history all its own, as it was purchased from the state surplus department for \$5.00 by Mr. F. D. Cooper, after it was found lying in a field near Camp Polk Prison on Blue Ridge Road. The prison used the bell for many years to call prisoners to lunch at 12 o'clock. After purchasing the bell, Mr. Cooper made arrangements with Mr. Rex Mann, who lived beside the church, to take his wrecker and bring the bell to our church to be installed. So when we hear our church bell ring, we can truly say it was saved to proclaim the life of Christ in our community. For fifteen consecutive years ushers Biff Abbott and Maurice Partin rang our church bell at 10:45 for church services.

We rejoice and thank God that six young men have gone out from Westover Church into the ministry: Howard M. (Hank) Wilkinson, 1964; James R. (Joe) Howard IV, 1975-78; Curtis W. Campbell, 1977; William W. (Bill) Snotherly, Jr.; K. Bryan Sexton, Jr., 1979; Larry D. Crane, 1985. Also, we have had several students, most of them from Duke Divinity School, who have worked especially with the children and youth of our church.

MINISTERS OF WESTOVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1945-1947	Herman S. Winberry
1947	Walter N. McDonald
1947-1949	Hollis W. Huston
1949-1954	George C. Megill
1954-1956	Paul D. Houston
1956-1959	Russell H. Caudill
1959-1962	Robert H. Eason
1962-1969	Ralph L. Fleming, Jr.
1969-1975	Kermit L. Braswell
1975-1988	Kenneth B. Sexton
1988-1990	Vassar W. Jones
1990-Present	Robert S. Shields

I love thy church, O God!
Her walls before thee stand
dear as the apple of thine eye,
and graven on thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
for her my prayers ascend,
to her my cares and toils be given,
till toils and cares shall end.
--Timothy Dwight