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THE HISTORY OF AYNOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by

Edith Richardson Bryant, Joyce Huggins Graham, and Carlisle Dawsey

In the early 1900's the Burroughs and Collins Co. of Conway bought up thousands of acres of land in the Aynor area. About 1905 a railway was built into the area and logging the timber was begun. From this a town evolved.

The activity of the Dawsey family was felt from the very beginning. It was under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. James Wilson Dawsey that a Sunday School began on June 1, 1912 in the old Aynor Grammar School. Following revival services conducted in October 1912 by Rev. A.D. Betts and a newly consecrated minister Cyrus Dawsey it was decided that a church was needed and the Aynor Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. The first pastor was assigned in 1913, he was Rev. M.W. Hook and very little is remembered of him. The congregation realized that a site for the church was needed and approached the Burroughs and Collins Co. On March 15, 1913 by their deed recorded in Deed Book VVV at Page 130 Office of Recorder of Deeds for Horry County, the Burroughs and Collins Co. donated Lots 14,15, and 16 of Block 34 of the Town of Aynor to the Aynor Methodist Episcopal Church through its trustees: James Wilson Dawsey, J.M. Kirton, Alexander Johnson, George Huggins, E.C. Altman, J.F. Lewis, F.A. James, and J.E. Cooper.

The church continued meeting in the old grammar school until completion of the Graddy Masonic Lodge in 1914. By this time a Baptist Church had been organized and they both met in the Lodge with alternating Sunday morning and evening services. The

real organization of the church took place under Rev. J. Emerson Ford. Rev. Ford came in 1914 and took Aynor as his first charge and built the first parsonage. A Rev. Barnes came for a few months in the early part of 1915, but was replaced later in the year by Rev. William Hampton Richardson. Rev. Richardson was the father of Edith Bryant. He was a supply pastor and when it came time for him to move he had decided to make Aynor his home.

The pastor in 1917 was Rev. D.H. Attaway. He began construction of the sanctuary with the help of Mr. Hugh James Floyd, Mr. John Tarte, and Mr. Charlie Mishoe. Rev. Richardson died January 20, 1919, in what was known as the "Flu Epidemic of 1918". Rev. Attaway died within two weeks, in February 1919. The Rev. Samuel Calhoun Morris finished out the few remaining months of his term.

The Rev. E.K. Garrison came in the latter part of 1919 and finished the church. Because of the swapping of worship service times between the Baptists and the Methodists the first sermon preached in the new Aynor Methodist Church was preached by Rev. Westberry, the Baptist pastor, as it was their turn for morning worship services. Rev. Garrison was replaced in 1923 by Rev. Jessie G. Ferguson. Rev. Ferguson is remembered for his evangelistic zeal, and the early church made some of its best growth under him. Rev. Ferguson left in 1926 and the Rev. W.V. Jerman took his place. Things could have gone better under Rev. Jerman and he only stayed two years.

In 1928 Rev. J.B. Prosser arrived. He only stayed one year. Rev. W.E. Sanders arrived in 1929 and growth picked up again. His ministry among the youth is well documented in old records. He worked here during the Depression years and records

show that he and his family lived on seven hundred and forty dollars per year in salary.

In spite of poverty attendance picked up and the church grew.

Rev. S.D. Colyer arrived in 1932 and stayed until 1934 when he was replaced by Rev. J.F. Campbell. During the stay of Rev. Campbell the church was brick veneered and assumed much the same look that will be kept in people's memory of the old sanctuary. Rev. Campbell left in 1937.

Rev. R.P. Hucks arrived in 1937 and stayed until 1939. He was replaced by Rev. H.F. Jordan who died in 1941. Rev. W.C. Henderson of the South Aynor Charge helped fill in until a young supply pastor and his wife arrived from Virginia. His name was Rev. Plunkett. They were very young, arrived in the beginning of a very harsh winter, and did not last for a month. Rev. John Hugh Eaddy came in the very latter part of 1941 and finished out the term. He stayed until 1943.

Rev. Charles Polk came in 1943 as a new preacher in his first charge while studying at Duke Divinity School. He tore down the old parsonage and rebuilt the present one, losing an eye in the process. He also got a wife, the former Hattie Best of Sandy Plain.

In 1947 Rev. Robert N. Wells came and again concentrated on youth and the church grew. Bryant Young, a college student, was here from 1952 to 1953. Rev. John L. Parrish came in 1953 and took the church, which had been operated on very unstructured lines, and organized it along the conference plan with committees and commissions. Mrs. Parrish stands out in the minds of many adults for her work with them when they were young. Under the stay of Rev. Parrish the old Educational Building was constructed. He left in 1956 and Rev. B.B. Brown arrived and continued with the emphasis on youth. Rev. Brown left in 1960.

The charge at that time, with the exception of Rehobeth, was unified and led to really pull together under the leadership of Rev. J. Bert Watson. His ministry was so appreciated that he stayed for six years, until 1966. He established a sound financial footing in our church with a stewardship emphasis.

In 1966 Rev. W.D. Davis came to us. In the second year of his term, 1968 the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren and we then became the Aynor United Methodist Church. In the same year the process was begun to unite the black and the white conferences. Rev. Davis' four years were characterized by faithful visitations and a ministry to persons.

Rev. Jim Rush arrived in 1970. His ministry here will always be remembered in the person of Neusa e Silva, a young Brazilian girl sponsored in her education by the church. He is also remembered for helping to erect a church in Natal, Brazil; and for his emphasis on helping to build another church in Bogota, Colombia. Rev. Rush's ministry towards missions will long be remembered in Aynor. During his stay the old sanctuary was also renovated and remodeled to its final condition. In 1974 during the last year of his term the merger between the white conference and the black conference was finally completed.

Rev. W.L. Edwards came in 1975 and stayed with us until 1980. He was a jovial songster with a musical ministry. Many minds will recall for many years his enthusiastic singing and the many and varied musical specials that he brought the church.

Rev. H. Shedron Suggs came to us in 1980. Under his ministry we completed the Parsonage Equity Transaction, we established the Minister's Pension Fund, and we built the Fellowship Hall between the old Sanctuary and the old Educational Building. Work

began on it in the summer of 1983. It was completely paid for during its construction and was dedicated on April 1, 1984 with a large congregational dinner immediately following worship services.

Things went rather smoothly with the church till the evening of Monday, May 16, 1988. While Rev. Suggs was away preaching at a revival service lightning struck the eastern end of the old Educational Building and set it on fire. It was well under way but confined to the Educational Building when discovered. Despite the efforts of firefighters from a twenty mile radius to halt the blaze before it reached the Sanctuary, nothing stopped it, and before the eyes of a horrified congregation the flames took all. By dawn nothing remained but a charred hull.

Through the grace of God and the kindness of the Horry County Board of Education the church was allowed to meet in the Aynor High School Auditorium. The first services were held the Sunday following the fire, May 22, 1988, over 180 were in attendance. The old buildings were gone, but it was very clear the Church endured. Under Rev. Suggs' very able leadership the congregation rallied together. A Study Committee was formed consisting of: John Dawsey chairman, Irene Bell, Rachel Dawsey, Greg Grant, Sylvia Page, and Rob Taylor. Based upon their study and recommendations a Building Committee of: W.F. Davis, Sr. chairman, James Gerrald vice chairman, Anita Maness secretary, Sheldon Dawsey, Glenn Winburn, Doris Koon, Kenneth Frye, Judy Goodson, and Luther Altman was appointed; and rebuilding was begun. It was decided to move across Tenth Avenue to the east side of the street. The church already owned a majority of the site; part of which had been purchased from the Will Lewis Estate and part of which had been donated to the church by Charles B. Huggins. Two additional lots in the

middle of the block were purchased from E.H. Carmichael to enlarge the site. A new Sanctuary, Educational Building, and Fellowship Hall in one combined structure was designed by Key Architecture of Florence and erected by Chancel Construction Company of Conway. The Ground Breaking was held December 18, 1988 with Lemuel Carter, District Superintendent, Rev. Suggs, and W.F. Davis, Sr. turning the first shovels full of earth. Construction was complete and the cornerstone was laid August 20, 1989. The Consecration Service was held October 22, 1989 with District Superintendent Carter and Rev. Suggs presiding. Rev. Suggs stayed with us until 1992, continuing to help us pull together and to meet our now much increased financial obligations. He became seriously ill in 1991 and was unable to fill the pulpit the last several months of his term. Lay Speakers from the church and community rose to the occasion.

Rev. Richard Knight and family came to us in June of 1992. Rev. Knight (Dickie to some, Richard to most) brought to us a vibrant ministry to families with emphasis on time for the small children during worship, especially at christenings and baptisms; family night socials; and close involvement with youth. During his stay attendance increased, we adopted a mission statement for our church, accepted a vision of our goals to the year 2000, bought a van, purchased the remainder of the Carmichael property, which included the residence and extended our campus to Eleventh Avenue. Rev. Knight's enthusiasm extended into the community and the Aynor Area Ministerial Association was formed, we also began joint services each quarter with our sister churches: Brown Swamp, Pisgah, and Rehobeth. The church experienced growth overall under Rev. Knight and the building debt was retired several years ahead of schedule.

Rev. John Bauknight arrived in June of 1999, under his ministry we held the Dedication Service for our church on October 10, 1999 Bishop Lawrence McCleskey brought the sermon , District Superintendant Lemuel Carter and former pastor Richard Knight gave their reflections of construction and the effort extended to pay off the mortgage early. The mortgage burning was conducted by Mr. Bill Davis and Mr. James Gerrald with finger warming assistance by Rev. Bauknight. Plans have been made to construct a covered area at the rear of the Fellowship Hall. Rev. John Bauknight left in June of 2003 and in his place arrived Rev. Dennis Mardis. Rev. Mardis would sally forth and bring the message in the aisle. He had a passion for horses and reenacted two of the circuit rides on horseback. Rev. Mardis left in 2008 and in his place we have the Rev. Anthony ‘Tony’ Adams. Under Rev. Adams leadership we have constructed a new parsonage. We also celebrated our church’s “Centennial Celebration” with Rev. Adams and Historian Carlisle Dawsey receiving the certificate at Annual Conference from Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor. Rev. Adams left us in 2014 and Rev. Bill Heutess came and stayed only one year since he was so tied up with work at the conference. Rev. Heutess left us in 2015 and Rev. Joyce Murphy arrived. Rev. Murphy had an ecumenical feel for the community and several “Marches for Jesus” were held during her stay with us. Rev. Murphy left us in 2019 and Rev Snelgrove arrived. We are still writing the history of Aynor United Methodist Church as we live faithfully before God together.