Buffalo Union History
Buffalo United Methodist Church

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HISTORY OF BUFFALO METHODIST CHURCH

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh H. Hermon

In 1902 four ministers with the knowledge of what Christ had meant to their lives, and faith in what He could mean to the lives of others, visited Buffalo for the purpose of establishing a church in this infant industrial community. They were, Rev. S. C. Morris, Rev. E. Z. James, Rev. J. D. Meadows, and Bishop W. W. Duncan. Phillip Garris, a young college graduate who boarded at Union and worked at Buffalo, was assigned to this worthy project. Worship services at first were held in the homes.

Buffalo was put on a charge with Green Street, Monarch, and Unity in 1903. Rev. E. S. Jones was appointed as pastor and Rev. J. B. Camak as his assistant. It was in this year (1903) that the church was built and dedicated by Bishop Duncan whose son was then Superintendent of the mill. That was a Union Church with Methodist and Baptists worshipping in the same building. The charter membership included Mrs. Tom J. Rountree, Mrs. J. R. Smith, and Mrs. H. L. Stone. Mr. Harriman was the first Superintendent of the Sunday School and Mr. Winslow served as his assistant.

In 1904 Rev. L. E. Wiggins came as pastor. This was his first work. He was married during his pastorate and served the Church for three years.

Mr. N. Winroth, mill official and Chairman of the Board of Stewards for several years was a progressive minded man. Mr. DeShields served well as trustee. Mr. H. L. Stone served faithfully for many years as steward and Sunday School teacher. Both of these have passed on to their reward. So has "Uncle" Tom Inabinett who was also faithful in his teaching and in his activities with young people.

The Sunday school rooms were fixed during the pastorate of Rev. R. O. Webb. One noteworthy event was the Sunday this man of God marched 150 men from the "flat" to Sunday school. Large crowds attended the church while he was minister.

Rev. L. W. Johnson blessed many with his messages, visits, and prayers. Mrs. Johnson was at the Methodist Home for the Aging in Orangeburg, S. C. until her recent departing to her Heavenly Home.

Rev. L. W. Shealy was one of the best liken ministers in the history of the church, being widely known. He was known for his unfailing sense of humor and his
Rev. Carl Goodwin was known as one of the best at visitation. This endeared him to the hearts of many. His good-natured, friendly greeting made them feel that here indeed was a friend upon whom they could depend.

The interior of the church was renovated under Rev. J. L. Jett. Mrs Jett who was his excellent assistant died during his pastorate. An organization of the Young Ladies, known as the Ethel Jett Circle was formed in memory of her.

Rev. M. B. Fryga, though quite a young fellow was a hard worker for the church. He did much for the Boy Scouts and young people. He was married while at Buffalo. He also started the fund for the purchase of the organ.

Rev. T. H. Vickery was pastor only ten months. He led in the purchase and installation of the organ and chimes, the worship center, two crosses and the bulletin board. He was a hard worker and a good organizer.

Two successful revivals were held during the pastorate of Rev. W. O. Henderson, who was zealous for souls. His wife was a wonderful spiritual life worker. The most outstanding among the many converts was Mickey Fisher, now pastor of the St. James Methodist Church in Columbia, South Carolina.

The carpet was purchased and put down under the leadership of Rev. E. P. Bell. Rev. Bell possessed a dynamic personality which endeared him to everyone. During his ministry 134 new members were added to the church. Also the Sunday School rooms were painted and fans installed. Rev. Bell served five years as pastor, being the first to serve more than four years in the history of this church.


The following Methodist Ministers, have close ministerial connections in the church; Rev. J. F. Farr, Dr. C. W. Lever, Rev. W. R. Parker, Rev. J. T. Gregory, Rev. Francis Gossett, and Rev. F. V. Robertson, now deceased.

During Mr. Bell's ministry we began a building fund, planning toward the erection
of a new church school plant. The present one not being adequate to meet the needs of the membership. Special days were set aside, such as Mother's day and Father's Day in which gifts were given in memory of, or honoring loved ones. Thus our building fund grew with the passing years.

Succeeding Rev. Bell in 1954 was Rev. Jesse G. Ferguson who served six years. Mr. Ferguson was a genuinely Christian gentleman whose life was dedicated to God through service to his fellowman. Under his leadership the cause for which he labored has prospered. Through his unflinching faith and untiring efforts his vision, an educational plant became a reality.

Mr. Ferguson was called to his Eternal Reward June 2, 1960 just three weeks before his retirement.

Miss Ruth Ferguson, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Ferguson is a deaconess working in St. John's Methodist Church in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

The United Merchants and Manufacturers, Inc. (owners of Buffalo Mill at that time) gave the Church the title of the land where the church is located and also gave additional space for the church school building.

The various organizations are active in their work. Frank Vess is Chairman of the Official Board, Bennie Davis is Sunday School Superintendent, Mrs. Florence Caldwell is President of the W.S.C.S., Mrs. Zora O'Dell is President of the W.S.G., Miss Connie Thomas is President of the M.Y.F. with Mr. and Mrs. Lester Zimmerman as Counsellors. Mr. & Mrs. Tom Robertson are counsellors of the M.I.F. The Commissions are organized, the following being Chairmen:

- Membership and Evangelism - Alberta Brock
- Missions - Ila Harmon
- Education - Lester Zimmerman
- Social Concerns - Juanita Nance
- Stewardship and Finance - Grady O'Dell

Mrs. Zora O'Dell is the Director of Music and Mrs. Reba Bogan is Choir Director and Organist. Miss Meridith Fleming is Pianist. Mrs. Zora O'Dell is also Director of the Men's Chorus. This Choir is always in charge of the music for the Sunday evening services.

The following are Church Officers:

- Trustees: Robert Brawley, Henry Brock, Weaver Medford
Elected Stewards:

Honorary Stewards:
Mrs. Thurston Bogan, Mrs. W. R. Gibbs, Mr. Roy Price, Mrs. T. J. Rountree, Mrs. Mande Malone

Church Lay Leader: Curtis Sanders
Church Treasurer: Paul Malone
Financial Secy.: Francis Mitchell
Membership Secy: Alberta Brock
Communion Steward: Winnie Frost
Hospital and Homes Steward: Frank Vess
District Steward: Frank Vess, Tom Brock (Reserve)
Membership Cult. Supt.: Henry Thomas
History and Records: Zora O'Dell
Recording Steward: Glen P. Caldwell
Supt of Adult Div.: Bennie Fleming
Supt. of Youth Div.: Lester Zimmerman
Supt. of Childrens Div.: Florence Caldwell

Pastoral Relations Committee:
Paul Malone, Margaret Robertson, Weaver Medford

Parsonage Committee:
Winnie Frost, Vernelle Pruitt, Avonell Zimmerman

Christian Vocations Committee:
Janet Inman, Chairman

Following Rev. Jesse Ferguson was Rev. Joseph H. Flood who served three years. During his Ministry the Educational Plant was dedicated and the mortgage burned with Mrs. Ferguson participating in the services. Many new members were added to the church through transfer of membership, and profession of faith under Mr. Flood's leadership. Mrs. Flood was a devout Christian and Spiritual leader. Through her efforts the W.S.C.S. sponsored services in the homes for Shut-ins. She also helped organize the W.S.C. of this church.

Next came Rev. Will Rogers. (June 1963. "Buffalo Bill, all the little Bill's, Agnes and Dona Nina") coming to this church as their first charge since retiring to the United States from Brazil (23 years as Missionaries). The Church and surrounding Community has had a spiritual up-lift under the leadership of this devoted Man of God and his family. To be associated with them is to catch something of the
true Spirit of Christ. Their passion for souls, their zeal in all that they undertake in the Name of Christ is reflected in the work that has been accomplished since they came to this Church. During 42 weeks more than $14,000 has been raised toward the building of a new Sanctuary. Today we stand on the threshold of a new era in the history of our Church. Looking back we are filled with memories, some happy, others sad. Looking ahead we feel the challenge. Like Paul we can say, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

This we feel as we think of tearing down the Sanctuary to begin a new one. We are proud of our Church, located on a hill as a Spiritual light house. We feel that it's meaning and its purpose cannot be hidden. We realize that into the making of the history of this Church have gone the labors and sacrifices of many good people. Our prayer is, that those of us who serve here now may be able to do as much; that we may dedicate ourselves, and I quote" with an increased measure of devotion", toward establishing God's kingdom here on earth. Shall it be in memory of those who have gone on before? No, but to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ our Lord who also loved the Church and gave his life for it.

Below is a list of the Pastors who have served this Church:

- Rev. Phillip Garris, June, 1902 - Dec. 1902
- Rev. E. S. Jones, Dec. 1902 - Dec. 1903
- Rev. L. E. Wiggins, Dec. 1903 to Dec. 1906
- Rev. E. M. Robertson, Dec. 1907 to Dec. 1908
- Rev. Elzie Myers, Dec. 1910 to Dec. 1911
- Rev. D. D. Jones, Dec 1911 to Nov. 1912
- Rev. W. F. Gault, Nov. 1912 to Nov. 1914
- Rev. J. M. Gasque, Nov. 1914 to Nov 1915
- Rev. E. H. Harvey, Nov. 1915 to Nov. 1918
- Rev. J. C. Cunningham, Nov. 1918 to Nov 1919
- Rev. T. D. Bailey, Nov. 1919 to Nov. 1920
- Rev. W. G. Smith, Nov. 1920 to Nov. 1921
- Rev. R. O. Webb, Nov. 1921 to Nov. 1924
- Rev. J. G. Farr, Nov. 1924 to Nov. 1925
- Rev. J. W. Pryor, Nov. 1925 to Nov. 1926
- Rev. F. V. Robertson, Nov. 1926 to Nov 1928
- Rev. C. M. Morris, Nov. 1928 to Nov. 1929
- Rev. J. E. Manly, Nov 1929 to Nov 1931
- Rev. L. W. Johnson, Nov. 1931 to 1933
- Rev. C. D. Goodwin, Nov. 1933 to 1937
- Rev. L. W. Shealy, Nov. 1937 to 1941
- Rev. J. L. Jett, Nov. 1941 to 1943
- Rev. M. B. Frye, Nov. 1943 to 1947
- Rev. T. H. Vickery, Nov. 1947 to 1948
- Rev. W. O. Henderson, Nov. 1948 to 1949
- Rev. E. F. Bell, Nov. 1949 to Oct. 1954
- Rev. J. H. Flood, June 1960 to June 1961
- Rev. Will Rogers, June 1963