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HISTORY  
of  
AUSTELL METHODIST CHURCH

## A HISTORY OF THE AUSTELL METHODIST CHURCH.

(By Mrs. R.L.Nesbit.)

When we think of a church, we naturally think of a tall, beautiful building with stained glass windows and soft lights, of adequate Sunday School quarters- pianos and organs and other equipment. But that isn't what constitutes a church. The word 'church' means "The called out" that is, "Those who are called out;" called out of sin, the Christian membership, the brotherhood.

But now we are speaking of the church building and if you will go with me, we will think of a time about one hundred years ago, before the lovely little city of Austell was thought of, no railroad through here, and all this land that is half surrounded by Sweetwater Creek was just woods and marshy swamps with some cleared fields. The land was owned by the Mozleys and the home place was in sight of this church. Across Sweetwater Creek Israel Causey had built a home at what is now known as the Maxham place. Israel Causey was an Irishman, but a good American, none-the-less, and he wanted a church building in which he, his family and his neighbors could worship God. So he built a church, giving the land and the timber. I don't know, it might have been a log house, but it was a church and the only church south of Marietta and between Atlanta and Villa Rica.

The church was called Causey's Chapel and had such eloquent preachers as Dr. J. B. C. Quillian and Rev. Simon Peter Richardson. Mrs. Tommie Clay Davis, deceased, who lived until recently near Austell and who was the sister of Senator Stephen Clay was the ;last member of Causey's Chapel. Her father James Clay was secretary of the church for a number of years. The church was used by all denominations, but the Causey's were Methodists. This was before the War between the States, but it was a very live church and had a large membership.

151

After the death of Israel Causey in 1880 the membership was divided into three parts, one third building Trinity church, one third building Salt Springs Camp Ground, this was located between the Springs and the town of Lithia Springs. The other third built a church on Marietta Road on the J.D.Perkerson property, calling it Mt. Olive. This was a beautiful location for a church, a large grove of oaks and a clear, bold spring on the property, but the church was here only four years.

In 1884 when the railroad was built through here and a little town began to grow, Glenn Owen Mozley gave ground to build a schoolhouse for the children who were coming in. The little schoolhouse was built on the site of the present Grammar School.

Others moved into town, The R.W.Perkersons, The Morse family, The R.H. Cousins family, Eli Medlock, Dr. J.B.Medlock. There was one thing lacking, there was no church in which to worship. The members of Mt. Olive Church and the Georgia Conference were influenced to move the church into the town. Mt. Olive church was torn down and moved into Austell with Glenn Owen Mozley again giving land, the site of our present church.

The small wooden schoolhouse was used for Sunday School and worship services while the church was being built.

It was about this time that Rev. Tom Pierce, Presiding Elder built a home here, and Dr. Potter came with his family and built a home.

Mrs. Tom Pierce was a great Sunday School worker and their son, Tom Pierce, Jr., was secretary of the Sunday School for a number of years.

Mr. R.C.Cousins, deceased, told me, and I quote, "I was just a small boy when we attended Sunday School in the schoolhouse. I remember in those days money was not so plentiful as it has been since and Mrs. Pierce told us that if we did not have change to give to the collection on Sunday morning, just to bring a few eggs. And I can remember when the secretary would stand up to read his report, he would report 'so much money and so many eggs.'"

16

When the church was finished, it was named the Austell Methodist Church and was put on the Powder Springs Charge. At the Annual Conference, held in Marietta December 7-11, 1887, the church was made a three quarter station was taken off the Powder Springs charge and named the Austell Charge, with Trinity having one Sunday each month. W. W. Brinsfield was the first pastor sent by conference to the new charge.

When we think of the prominent names of people who have been members of the church down through the years, we know that Austell Methodism has a glorious history behind it. The men and women of the past have made the church of today. Those old members of the church were the backbone of the country and were the ancestors of a great part of our citizens of today. The church is justly proud of such names as, J.D.Perkerson, R.W.Perkerson, R.H.Cousins, S.K.Cochran, John P. Sewell, D.K.Love, James Carroll, Alfred Tucker, Mr. Simelton, J.B.Humphries, Glenn Mozley, Isaiah Mozley, Newton A.Morse, J.O. Mozley, Jim Perkerson, Eli Medlock, Dr. J.B.Medlock, Mr. Mizelle and Jeff Ireland. Those were the older ones.

Mrs. J.B.Medlock was a great church worker as well as Dr. Medlock. Coming here in 1883, she taught a Sunday School class for ten years. Her daughter, Mrs. Pearl Medlock Cole, a member of our church today was the first girl baby born in Austell.

When W.W. Brinsfield was pastor, the first Methodist parsonage was built and one reads that it was valued at \$1,000. A six-room two-story house now owned by B.A.Cooke.

Later we read the following report, "Our hearts were sad and heavy at the conference. It looked as if we would lose our parsonage because of an indebtedness." And then at the next Quarterly conference he reports, " We asked the ladies of each church to make a quilt and get names for it at ten cents each. They went right to work and now we have \$100. and the quilts at Lithia and Trinity yet to be sold. We will save our parsonage.

17

One preacher reports, "We regret to report many members of the church living far below what we believe to be true discipleship. They seem to be satisfied with what they have attained- contented just to be in the church and do nothing for the glory of God!" And then later he reports, "We regret to say that the spiritual state of the church is not what it should be. There is but one Sunday School on the charge and it is falling off in attendance. There is no league now, the one we reported at the last Quarterly conference died."

We find a financial report that reads, "What amount has been raised this quarter for the support of the ministry? Austell- \$4.00, Lithia Springs, \$10.85, Trinity- \$12.65, Mt. Vernon, -\$7.00, making a total of \$34.50. Paid preacher in charge \$30.00, paid Presiding Elder, \$4.50.

No wonder the preacher reported that the spiritual state of the church was not what it should be!

But some reports were good. We read items like this, "The charge seems to have been in good condition by the last pastor. We find good and loyal members in all of the churches, ready and willing to co-operate with the pastor in every good work."

The Sunday Schools at Austell and Trinity are doing good work. The School at Austell is almost a model school. We have 100 pupils with adequate officers and teachers who are prompt and regular in attendance. I doubt if there is a better school in the district."

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society makes the following report, "Numbers, 17, Subscribers to Missionary Advocate, 9; dues collected, \$19.00; On Pledge and extension, \$12.50. The Society is in a prosperous condition, and we are hoping and praying to be more useful in God's kingdom."

Then we find a financial report that reads like this, "What amount has been raised for the support of the ministry, Austell, \$88.55, Trinity, \$63. Lithia Springs, \$50.35. Paid preacher, \$177.65. Paid Presiding Elder, \$24.25.

18

Later the minister reported, " It is with gratitude to God that we report the spiritual condition of the charge to be far in advance of what it has been. We have had two great revivals this quarter."

Oh, the tears, the worries, the sorrows and the heartaches and then the joys that go to make the life of a church!

We read in the conference records that the trustees were authorized in 1908 to sell the old parsonage and apply on building a new one closer to the church. It was sold for the amount of \$954. and a new one was constructed at a cost of \$977.03. Rev. C.F.Hughes was the first man to occupy the new parsonage, coming here in 1909.

In 1911 we find a record of repairs on the church, new roof, new windows, paint, labor, etc. costing around \$234.00.

When Rev. J.W.Stephens was pastor in 1924-25 the church was remodeled and Sunday School rooms built at a cost of \$1700. The lumber for this work was given by different members, among them being R.C.Cousins, deceased.

The charge at one time had five churches, Austell, Lithia Springs, Mableton, Trinity and Mt. Vernon, and has been classed in several different districts, Rome, Carrollton, Atlanta, Marietta and Atlanta West.

We have no conference records earlier than 1888 but in the 67 years of its life the church has had 40 pastors. Namely, Joseph Carr, J.M.Lowery, John L. Richardson, R.R.Johnson, C.L.Patillo, J.T.Gibson, N.Z.Glenn, W.W.Brinsfield, W.T.Caldwell, H.L.Edmondson, A.D.Echols, S.A.Harris, E.W.Ballenger, J.A.Thurman, J.Tillman Eakes, W.W.Gaines, F.G.Golden, Thos. H. Gibson, J.L.Allgood, W.H.Speer, J.B.Gresham, J.E.Russell, Lawrence W.Neff, W.W.Cash, J.W.Stephens, F.S.Hudson, L.F.VanLandingham, S.A.F.Wagner, A.T.Hind, A.P.Watkins, Carl Adkins, Arthur Maness, J.V.Jones, J.T.Robins, V.B.Hamrick, G.H.Bailey and Wm.A.Tyson, Jr.

The charge has had the following great presiding elders and district Superintendents, A.C.Thomas, J.W.Roberts, J.W.Heidt, R.J.Bigham, S.B.Ledbetter, T.J.Christian, Joel T.Daves, W.H.Cooper, W.H.LaPrade, Walter Dillard,

19

J.H.Eakes, Marvin Williams, Augustus Earnest, Wills M.Jones, Nath Thompson, H.H.Jones, Dr. Wallace Rogers, Dr. Lester Rumble.

In later years the membership of the Austell church has included the names of a great number of the most prominent and well known people. We like to remember the names of our members, even though they have passed away, some of them many years ago. We would like to mention some of them. We do not have space for all. Mrs. Mary Frances Strickland, Mr. and Mrs. W.T. Strickland, Dr. and Mrs. J.M.Strickland, Miss Zua Strickland, Paul T.Strickland, Miss Josephine Morse, Mr. and Mrs. W.H.Winters, Mrs. W.B.Westmoreland, Mr. and Mrs. J.J.Verner, Mr. and Mrs. R.S.Mozley, Mr. and Mrs. H.N. Osborne, Mr. and Mrs. Will Brown, Mr. Alfred Davis, Miss Alice Davis, Mr. and Mrs. John Jackson, Mrs. James Cureton, Mr. and Mrs. T.J.Starnes, Mrs. May C. Harber, Mr. E.H.Beebe, Mr. and Mrs. J.T.Henderson, Mrs. A.H.Irvine, Dr. L.G.Garrett, Sr., Mrs. Hamp Howell, Mrs. Julia Berry, Mr. and Mrs. Thad Humphries, Mrs. Nannie Smith, Mrs. J.M.Westmoreland, R.E.Wilson, Mrs. Emma Spinks, Mrs. Eliza Harrington, Mr. and Mrs. W.H.Causey, Mrs. C.J.Shelverton, J.A.McCain, Pat H. Winn.

Dr. J.M.Strickland was a steward and Sunday School teacher as long as he lived. He was a loyal and faithful member of his church.

W.H.Causey was born here in sight of the church property 99 years ago. He lived and died a member of the church.

For several years prior to 1947, the membership of the church had been planning for a new church building, a building to fit the needs of a growing congregation and in keeping with changing and improving conditions. A building committee was appointed by the pastor, G.H.Bailey at the 4th quarterly conference, June 9, 1947. This committee was formed by the following members, H.L.Sewell, Chairman; Dr. Raeford W.Tharpe, co-chairman; Roy Brannon, E.C.Jordan, Mrs. C.D.Rutherford, Mrs. C.T.Perkerson, Mrs. H.G. Winters, Pat H. Winn, L.C.R.Deck and the minister. S.E. Berry was elected Secretary and treasurer.

20

At the annual conference, held in Atlanta, which had been changed from November to June, G.H.Bailey was transferred from Austell to Powder Springs and Rev. Wm.A.Tyson, Jr., was sent to Austell.

Mr. Tyson and the building committee went right to work and planned a \$10,000 Sunday for the 5th Sunday in August, 1947. The day was a happy one and \$8,000 in cash was realized.

We moved out of the old church in September, 1947 and used the auditorium of the Grammar School from then until April, 1949. The old church building was sold to J.M.Causey for \$550. Grading began in January of 1948, and actual construction began in May, 1948.

The lowest bid received from contractors was \$93,000, and highest bid was \$114,000, but with the minister and the building committee acting as contractors, the building was constructed at an approximate cost of \$53,000. The furnishings and equipment are valued conservatively at \$10,000.

There are approximately 10,500 sqft of floor space in the building. The sanctuary and balcony will seat 375.

There is a large recreation room 40X70 ft. with an adjoining modernly equipped kitchen. There are 12 class rooms.

The furnishings in the sanctuary are placed in memory of members and former members of the church.

The altar rail was given in honor and memory of Glenn Owen Mozley. The windows are designed to tell the story of the Life of Christ. The 3 installed are, "Christ the Good Shepherd" honoring Mr. and Mrs. R.S.Mozley, "The Ascension" honoring Mr. and Mrs. D.K.Love and D.K.Love, Jr., "Christ the Healer," is the central picture and is located above the pulpit. It is in memory of Dr. L.G.Garrett, Sr., a beloved country doctor.

The organ is in <sup>honor</sup> memory of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Puett Francis.

In 1956 the total amount raised by the church for all purposes was \$2500.

This year of 1950-51 we raised 13,468 dollars, which is the smallest amount raised in the four year period.

21

In the four years we have reported approximately \$100,000 as having been spent by the church for all purposes.

The amount appropriated for the ministry has tripled in the four year period.

In 1947 the membership of the church was 274, in 1951 it is 352. 135 members have been received into the church during the time. The Sunday School has grown from 125 members to 221.

The church has a strong W.S.C.S. of 30 members and a Wesleyan Service Guild of 25 members, which are well attended and doing a great work. These women played no small part in financing the building of the church, contributing approximately \$2,100, to this fund in the four year period.

The first service was held in the new church on Sunday April 3, 1949 with Rev. Wm. A. Tyson, Jr., in charge. The first Quarterly conference to be held was on April 10, 1949 with Dr. Lester Rumble presiding.

On July 17, 1949 Bishop Arthur J. Moore conducted services. He was the first bishop to preach in the Austell church.

On October 2, 1949 a church conference was held and the name of the church was changed from the Austell Methodist Church to "The First Methodist Church of Austell."

The Atlanta West District Conference was held in the new church on January 9, 1951. This was the second time the charge had entertained a district conference.

In the elder days of Art,  
Builders wrought with greatest care  
Each minute and unseen part,  
For God sees everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,  
Both the unseen and the seen;  
Make the house where God may dwell  
Beautiful, entire and clean.

(H.W.L.)