HISTORY

of

CEDAR GROVE-CLIFTON CHARGE

Cedar Grove
In the year 1822 the John B. Morris family traveled in covered wagons from Abbeville County, S. C. to Henry Co., Georgia and purchased land lot No. 11 in the Fifteenth District from the original land grant holder, one Henry Meachamp Sr. on Nov. 21st of that year. A camp was set up and bonfires were kept all night to keep wild animals at a safe distance until a dwelling could be constructed.

In 1826 the said John Morris purchased the adjoining land lot No. 22 from the original land grant holders. By this time DeKalb Co. had been formed and all the area was in DeKalb County. From this plot of land, just where the cemetery now stands, a lot for a church was donated. That same year, 1828 a log chapel was erected and dedicated as Morris Church, in the Methodist Protestant Branch of Methodism.

Also in the year 1828 the Morris permanent home was built one quarter of a mile distant from the church.

Founders of the church are named as the said: John B. Morris, four of his sons, Rev. G. Watt Morris, Rev. Elijah Morris, Garrett L. Morris, Joseph Morris, Allen J. Cook and John Moore.

A neighbor of that day made the remark that John Morris had three sons who were preachers; therefore he had to build a church for them to have a place to preach.

Many have since lived to thank God for the vision which led to the building of Morris Church (Now Cedar Grove) however that vision took form.

Two other sons, Ben and John went to Texas as young men and John, the third preacher in the family became the father of John Harvey Morris who became a prominent minister in the M. E. Church South of the Texas and Oklahoma Conferences.

The eldest son, G. Watt Morris was first pastor of Morris Church and served for many years. It has been said that Uncle Watt, in his preaching days, spoke with such ease and fluency that one was reminded of rolling string off of a ball. He lived to the age of 93 years, long after the church was moved to its present site. The aged minister made request that he be buried so that his head would be placed on the spot where the pulpit of the old church stood. This was done.

In the days of the log church no heat was provided inside the building. When a member of the congregation became too cold he slipped outside to warm beside a bonfire in the yard.

*(note) I mention the two land lots because land for the original church and the present building were donated from the two different land lots.
In summer the meetings were held under a brush arbor. Fresh green leafed boughs piled on fresh for each day's service furnished cool shade for worshipers.

Negro slaves went to church with their masters and occupied rear seats provided. They repented and praised God at the same altar and went home to plough the good earth together and wait for the Lord's Blessings, spiritual and material. The black slave also took his turn at death with the white men and many of them were laid to rest on the hill where his masters too now lie buried.

In 1865 during Sherman's march through Georgia, a regiment of the Union Army camped on the hillside around the Morris Church. A young daughter at the Morris homestead near by, Miss Huldah Morris, felt the responsibility of the house as the men were away wearing Confederate Uniforms, there remaining at home the aged grandfather who was ill and younger children.

When the enemy's soldiers came to the Morris well for water, Huldah, with a prayer in her heart went to an officer telling him of the illness there and asking for protection for the night. And here follows one of the few recorded stories of kindness from the Northern Army during the Civil War. The officer promised to send a guard for the home, which he did, and as Huldah took up her vigil inside a front window, and watched the armed figure move back and forth in the cold moonlight she thanked God for her good fortune and wished for the day.

In 1872 a beautiful frame chapel was built on the opposite corner of the John Morris estate from the first building. This lot was donated by Garret L. Morris owner of the property. A school building was first built on the lot. Church services were held in the school building for some time before the church building was completed. The church was built at a cost of $200.00 Much material and labor also were donated.

Many ministers through the years have said that they felt a spiritual nearness in a peculiar way when they entered the church. An older person said he thought this was true because every nail was placed with a loving prayer.

The new church was dedicated in 1872 with Dr. F.H.M. Henderson, a professor at Bowden College, preaching the sermon.

After some months Rev. Lige Morris planted a grove of Cedar trees. In informal discussion, "Cedar Grove" was suggested as a name for the new church and the name stuck.

There were at this time about fifty members.

In the year 1877 Second Sunday in June, while Dr. Henderson was still pastor, the first Children's Day was observed with the welcome address being made by Will Simpson, then five years of age. Mr. Simpson is now eighty years old and is the only person still attending this fine annual celebration who remembers being on that first Children's Day program.
The second Sunday in June has become 'Home Coming Day' in a very real sense to many who took part in the Children's Missionary Program of yesteryear.

June 8, 1952 will mark the 75th year, the Diamond Jubilee of this celebrated day.

About the year 1880 the first musical instrument was placed in the church. Two young members, Miss Vickie Moore and Miss Fannie Stubs, pledged themselves to the task of selling enough homemade jellies to buy an organ. This was accomplished without too serious objection although these two were the only ones who felt the need at the time. However, many years later, when the song leader, Mr. Ben Morris, wanted to bring his violin to church - well - putting it mildly, this was considered by some to be a very forward suggestion, not to say sacrilegious. Before too long tho, all were enjoying the sweet strains of Mr. Morris' violin with his daughter, Rose, accompanying at the organ.

In 1905 a collection plate was passed inside the church for the first time. Formerly offerings were handed to a steward before or after the service.

Mr. George C. Morris and Mr. H. D. Moore were faithful pioneers of Sunday School work here. The two serving alternately for fifteen or twenty years, until Mr. Morris' death in 1914. Mr. Moore serving from that time until a short time before his death in 1936.

About the year 1920 a youth work was organized under the name of the Christian Endeavor Society. Since Unification this group has been known as the Methodist Youth Fellowship.

In 1925 a women's work was organized under the name of "The Ladies Aid Society" with Mrs. H. D. Moore as the first President. In 1934 when the Georgia Branch of the Woman's Missionary Auxiliary of the Methodist Protestant Church was organized, the name of the local society was changed to "The Woman's Auxiliary." Then in the new Methodist unification set-up, the name was changed to "The Woman's Society of Christian Service.

In the summer of 1930 the first Daily Vacation Bible School was held. The term was three weeks. The terms are shorter now but every year since the first, a carefully planned Vacation Bible School has been held. This school has been a great aid to the church in the training of teachers as well as in the training of the children.

This church co-operated with other churches in this area in the building and maintenance of Clifton Youth Training Camp 1932-1942. This was an accredited training school for First and Second Series Courses under direction of the Board of Christian Education of the Methodist Protestant General Conference. Cedar Grove sent from fifteen to twenty-four students every summer and furnished two accredited teachers for the project.

In 1936 six Sunday School rooms were added to the one room Chapel. In 1948 an annex of three larger rooms was built in the rear of the church. This gives room for ten classes with the Men's Bible Class holding session in the church auditorium.
In 1936 a Men's Brotherhood was organized and has been functioning since that time.

Since 1939 Cedar Grove and Clifton have enjoyed the fellowship of being on the same charge.

In 1949 a nice six room parsonage was erected on a lot next to the church.

In 1952, for the first time in its history, our church is maintaining a nursery during the preaching hour for the convenience of mothers of young children.

The church now has about 217 members and an average Sunday School attendance of 100 plus.

On Mother's Day 1952 a beautiful pot plant, now 70 years old or older was loaned to the Church again for the day. This lovely White Arabian Jasmine is now owned by Mr. Elmo Moore of Gladview Gardens, Atlanta, and was given to him by his aged Aunt, Miss Lizzie Moore forty years ago. The plant has been brought to the church for special occasions, weddings etc., many times and its worth grows with the years as we are reminded of Miss Lizzie and her sister Miss Ellen who with such devotion brought beautiful fresh flowers to the church every time the doors were opened for the many years that they were active members here. Also the Elmo Moores, who for twenty years have so loyally sided in the success of special days at the church by their generous floral contributions.

We would not try to list the names of the men and women who have shared in this labor of love in a sacrificial way, realizing that the prayers of the devout and patient spirits may have done as much toward keeping the candle aglow as have those who have been able to consecrate leadership ability to God's Kingdom in this small corner of the earth.

Knowing that our Divine Father will take account, we leave to Him the task of recognition and rewards.

Sixty or seventy years seems to be the life span of Cedar trees in these parts and pines came up unbidden, so - we now have the prettiest little white church you ever saw in the midst of the prettiest pine grove God ever grew - and the name is CEDAR GROVE.

Pastors:

1900-1906 John D. Keith
1902-1906 --- Watt Morris
1907-1910 --- Elijah Morris
1912-1914 --- F. H. M. Henderson
1914-1923 --- J. McD. Radford Sr.
1923-1934 --- Robert McGarity
1932-1934 --- John Anderson
1934-1942 --- C. B. McDaniel
1942-1943 --- Felix Sutphen
1944 --- Joel Cannon
1945-1946 --- Elger A. Pedgett
1947-1951 --- Lloyd W. Jackson
1951-1952 --- F. C. Shirley

Submitted by
Mrs. R. M. Moore
Church Historian