

CHATSWORTH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

M, R

May 23, 1971

Today is "Heritage Sunday" throughout United Methodist Churches everywhere. In keeping with traditional Methodist observances our church has decided to give a brief history of our local church.

This church was organized about 1905 on the present plot of land. The land was a gift of the company who drew up the plat for the city of Chatsworth. The first building was a frame building, which was moved from Ball Ground. A picture of that structure is recorded in the "Murray County History". Please check in the vestibule to see the picture.

We have only had two buildings, of course, additions have been made to the original building and the new sanctuary was completed about 1959. The property across the street (corner lot) was purchased by the church about four years ago.

Some of the charter members were: Mr. & Mrs. Frank Peeples, Mr. & Mrs. Jim Stanford, Mr. & Mrs. Jasper Moreland, Mrs. Mary Black, Asbury Smith, Mr. & Mrs. John Harris, Mrs. Callie Leonard, Mr. & Mrs. Ervin Baggett and Mr. & Mrs. Alvin Jones.

Today's membership includes several descendants of charter members. They are Paul and John Peeples, grandsons of the Frank Peeples', Mrs. Jack Benford, daughter of the Baggett's and their granddaughter, Mary Jo Benford Green. Our last charter member (the one who lived longest) was Mrs. Callie Leonard. She has a granddaughter, Mrs. Katheryn Hale and a great-granddaughter, Mrs. Ronnie Stocks, who are present members.

The church has provided Christian education ever since it was organized. Some of the Church School Superintendents have been: Jim Stanford (the first), Bob Bates, M.D. Jefferson, W.W. Fincher, R.L. Vining, Bill Thomas, R.H. Pearson and currently, Glenn Ridley. Mrs. Marie Kelly served in this capacity during World War II, while Mr. Vining was in the Armed Services.

Mr. Jim Stanford was also the first choir director of the church. The first musical instrument was an organ, no information available regarding it. The first piano we had was purchased by the Epworth League. Our present organ was purchased in 1955 or 1956, second hand, and Mrs. R.L. Vining was the first to play it. Mrs. L.F. Huff later taught some of the young girls to serve as organists.

Miss Rainey Goswick was the first president of the Epworth League. Miss Goswick has the certificate dated April 29, 1932, recognizing the Chatsworth Young People as a part of the organized youth movement of the church. The Epworth League became a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1930 at Dallas, Texas. Miss Etta Davis, of Eton, served as the counselor of the Epworth League for many years. Miss Etta is still active in the Eton Church.

The earliest ladies group was known as the "Ladies'Aide". They did not believe in foreign missions, so a group of younger women, which included Sarah Mae Dillard and Kate Vining (present members) formed another women's group called "The Young Women's Circle". Both of the ladies are still active in our present Women's Society of Christian Service. In 1940, all the women's groups were combined to become known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service. Mrs. Marie Kelly was the first president of this group.

Another new women's group was organized in 1968, when the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, thus forming our present Women's Society of Christian Service. Mrs. Kelly was again local president of the Women's Society. Mrs. Tom Greeson, of our church, was elected the first Dalton District President of the new structure.

The men of the church were once known as the Wesley Brotherhood, no details available. Our present day men's group was chartered in 1959 and then known as the "Methodist Men". Bill Thomas was the first president of this group.

The Epworth League was changed to the Methodist Youth Fellowship sometime in the early 40's. The last official records we have are dated October, 1940 and listed R.L. Parrott as it's president. Our records are incomplete and do not show when the MYF was first organized in our church. With the 1968 merger with the EUB, our young people's group was changed to United Methodist Youth Fellowship. Don Hawkins was the first president of that group.

Dr. R.H. Bradley and Mrs. T.W. Brooks are our oldest members of the church, however, both are inactive because of poor health. Mrs. Sarah Dillard is perhaps the person who has been an active member for the longest period of time (53 Years).

Mrs. Betty Jackson has been teaching in our Church School Dept. for the past 24 years. Others having taught for a great many years include Mrs. L.P. Huff and the late L.N. Foster and late W.H. Padgett. Mr. Padgett had two sons to go into the Methodist Ministry. Mrs. Padgett returned to Chatsworth several years ago and is still active in the church.

There are three Church School Classes in memory of former members. The Pearl Free Class was named in memory of a former minister's wife, who died at an early age shortly after leaving Chatsworth. The Ruth Redmond Class is named in memory of a spinister, who spent much of her time working for the Lord in this church. The Buzzy Brown Memorial Class was named in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Frederick Brown's young son, who died in 1959.

In 1968, our kitchen was remodeled with the labor being supplied by C.T. and E.A. Earnest. Funds were made available thru the WSCS, Methodist Men and other gifts. In 1969, we moved into our lovely new parsonage. It was consecrated in September, 1969. The Rev. Charlie Middlebrooks, District Superintendent and the Rev. George Wannamaker, Pastor, were in charge of the services.

Our library was started during Wannamaker's tenure. Books were donated mostly by members. Gregg Springfield built the bookshelves.

It was reported to the "Heritage Sunday Committee" that the Harrison Chapel Methodist Church Cemetery had been given to our church, when that church burned and it's members moved to our church. A check with the local Clerk of Court states that a deed was never recorded to indicate same.

For many years our church was a part of a charge conference, some of the ministers who served during that time were: Reverend Conway, J.C. Adams, B.V. Hamrick, Rev. Burtz, Rev. White, E.O. Lindsey, Rev. Moreland, Rev. Rutland, Red Haynes, Rev. McElrod, Floyd Walden, Louie Huckabee, Rev. Jones, J.W. King, Harvey King, Harry Free, J.B. Godfrey and E.W. Dunagan. These are not in order of service and it is reported that most of them were still students of Emory University while serving in this church.

Our first full time minister was the Rev. Albert Bruce. Rev. Bruce was here for 5 years. Following im in order were: Rev. Gilbert Steadham (4 years), Rev. C.L. Harris (3 years), Rev. George Wannamaker (4 years) and currently Cecil Dudley in his first year.

Committee:

Jeannette Greeson (Mrs. Tom)
Betty Peeples (Mrs. Carlton)

Committee Note:

It is hoped that this brief account of our local church will be informative to you, however, keep in mind that most of the information has not come from official records but from the memories of older members. We hope you will add to this account of our church's history if you have additional facts or corrections.