The History of

Cliftondale United Methodist Church
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In May of 1964, the North Georgia Annual Conference of the Methodist Church asked the Rev. John Brinsfield, a student at Candler School of Theology, to conduct a survey of the Cliftondale Community to determine the need for a Methodist Church in this area. Anticipating the establishment of such a church, the Conference, in March, 1964, purchased from Mr. Howard Hogan, a prominent Cliftondale resident, the Old Cook homeplace consisting of approximately seven acres of land located at 4095 Stonewall Tell Road.

In the course of his survey work, John became acquainted with Mr. & Mrs. Neal Hainlin, and their two daughters, Cheryl and Sarah. Because of the Hainlin's friendliness and hospitality, John made their home his "headquarters" during that summer. It was natural, therefore, that the first meeting of those families interested in organizing a Methodist Church should be held at the Hainlin's home. Present for that meeting were the following persons: Mrs. F. A. (Thelma) Ardeeser, Mr. & Mrs. A. L. Lewis (Al & Hazel), Mr. & Mrs. W. L. Hubbard (Bill & Edith), Mrs. W. M. (Macy) Summerlin, Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Wright (Doug & Elizabeth), the Hainlins, and John Brinsfield.

Those interested families continued to meet together. Then the first worship service was held in the Community Clubhouse at 8:30 A.M. on the morning of June 14, 1964. The service was held at this early hour in order that participating families might continue to attend Sunday School and Worship in the churches to which they belonged.

Members of that original group continued to meet at 8:30 A.M. during June, July, and August of 1964. But, in addition to worship, they were busy about other activities as well. As early as June, a Children's Choir was organized, and "The Church in the Wildwood" became their theme song. The first service of Holy Communion was celebrated by the congregation on July 5, 1964. The Rev. Ray Melear, pastor of the Owl Rock Methodist Church, assisted John with this service. Rev. Melear continued to be of considerable assistance to John in many ways during this organizational period.
A very unique service -- a "Cross-Raising Ceremony" -- was held on the church property on Saturday evening, August 29, 1964. Dr. Neal Hainlin had fashioned the cross from beams of the old Cook home which had been razed and removed from the property. The beams were joined by a wooden peg taken from the house. The cross was placed in the ground by the men of the church, and each placed a field stone around its base. Special guests for this "Cross-Raising" included the Rev. Joseph L. Black, District Superintendent, the Rev. Ray Melear of Owl Rock, and the Rev. Henley Campbell of Union City Methodist.

On the following morning, Sunday, August 30, 1964, the Rev. Joseph L. Black, District Superintendent of the Atlanta-Southwest District, formally organized the Cliftondale Methodist Church. Under the leadership of the Rev. John Brinsfield, fifteen members held the first Quarterly Conference of this new charge, and the Rev. Mr. Black constituted the congregation a Methodist Church.

At this organizational meeting held at the Community Clubhouse, the following persons were received as the first full members of the Cliftondale Church: Mr. F. A. (Joe) Ardeeser, Mr. F. A. (Thelma) Ardeeser, Mrs. B. C. (Mary) Bartlett, Mr. A. S. Bobo, Jr., Mrs. A. S. (Edith) Bobo, Dr. N. E. (Neal) Hainlin, Mrs. N. E. (Myrl) Hainlin, Miss Cheryl Hainlin, Miss Sarah Hainlin, Mr. Robert F. Uher, Mrs. R. F. (Mary Nell) Uher, Mrs. W. M. (Macy) Summerlin, Mr. Dan W. Summerlin, Mr. Douglas Wright, and Mrs. Elizabeth Wright.

Having organized the church, Rev. Brinsfield was to re-enter the seminary in September. In appreciation for his diligent efforts, the congregation held a picnic in his honor at the Al Lewis' home in late August. This Church Picnic was so enjoyable that it became an annual affair.

Succeeding John as pastor of the church in late August was the Rev. Miss Ruth Rogers. Having served the Hyatt Memorial and the St. John Churches across the previous nine years, Miss Rogers brought much skill and experience to the ministry of Cliftondale Church. Especially committed to administering the work according to the provisions of the Methodist Discipline, she provided much guidance in developing the organizational structure of the church.
By the end of September, 1964, seventeen additional members had been added to the church. Included among these additional Charter Members were the following persons: Mr. B. C. Bartlett, Mr. C. E. Goodwin, Mrs. C. E. Goodwin, Mr. W. L. Hubbard, Mrs. W. L. Hubbard, Keith Hubbard, Mr. A. L. Lewis, Mrs. A. L. Lewis, Arthur Lee Lewis, Jr., Gordon Reed Lewis, Mr. J. O. Mann, Mrs. J. O. Mann, Mr. C. S. Mitchell, Mrs. C. S. Mitchell, Storm Mitchell, Mr. T. L. Price, and Mrs. T. L. Price. The addition of these persons brought the total membership of the church to 32 by September 30, 1964.

As the church grew, there was increasing interest in a more suitable meeting-place. For several months, members of the church attempted to have moved to the church property a church building located on what was called the "Mayson Property" located on Bankhead Highway. By October, however, it became apparent that the building would not be available.

On October 2, 1964, Chairman F. A. (Joe) Ardeeser convened the first Official Board meeting at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Wright. And on Sunday, October 7, the services of worship were moved to the Cliftondale Elementary School. The County was in the process of remodeling the school during this time, so the congregation met for worship on some Sundays without a roof over their heads.

By December 6, 1964, a Methodist Youth Fellowship group was organized under the leadership of Mr. & Mrs. Bob Uher. And on December 21 a Christmas Party was held at the Community Clubhouse. The party featured a Money Tree to stimulate the Building Fund.

In July, 1964, the Rev. Richard J. Cathy succeeded Miss Rogers as pastor of the church. Rev. Cathy was our first regularly-appointed and full-time pastor. At the time he came to Cliftondale the church had fifty-nine full members, and nineteen preparatory members.

The first Vacation Church School was held at the Owl Rock Church in June of 1965, with Mrs. Mary Neil Uher serving as Co-Director. The first Executive Committee meeting of the W.S.C.S. was held in July, 1964. The first full meeting of the Women's Society of Christian Service was held in August of 1964 at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Wright. Mrs. Wright served as the first President of the W.S.C.S. Thirteen members attended this organizational meeting.
Throughout 1965 and early 1966, the congregation continued to hold services in the Cliftondale Elementary School. But work continued to provide a building on the church property. A Building Committee was named consisting of the following persons: Mr. F.A. Ardeese, Dr. N.E. Hainlin, Mr. A.L. Lewis, Mr. A.S. Bobo, Mr. R.F. Uher, Mr. Douglas Wright, and Rev. Miss Ruth Rogers. Through the work of this Committee, a 40' x 80' steel building was erected on the premises. By January 26, 1964, members of the church began work paneling and finishing the interior of the building. This required much hard work day and night for many months. Partitions had to be constructed for classrooms, the kitchen, and the restrooms. Finally, on June 5, 1966, the first service was held in the Metal Building. It was a very touching service, and the fulfillment of a dream. With a membership of seventy-one, the church now had a home.

In April, 1967, Rev. Cathy entered the Chaplaincy of the United States Air Force, and the Rev. Carroll Alexander became the new pastor of the Cliftondale Church. By this time, full membership had grown to eighty-eight, and there were twenty-six persons on the roll of preparatory members.

In November, 1967, a week-end Family Retreat was held at Camp Glisson, and all who attended had a good time. Two churches of our community joined in observing Thanksgiving that year. That service has grown into an annual joint service among the churches of our community.

March 14, 1968 was a time of great loss for the church. On that date the congregation lost its first member by death in the person of Mrs. Thelma Ardeese who had been such a blessing to the Cliftondale Church and community. Her's was the first (and, through 1974, the only) funeral held in the Cliftondale Church.

With the merger of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church in April, 1968, our church became formally known as The Cliftondale United Methodist Church.

The youth of the church presented a "Living Calvary Pagent" on April 12 and 13, 1968. Adults worked with costumes, lighting, sound effects, makeup and refreshments. On November 30, 1968, President Ann Goodwin conducted the Charter Meeting of the United Methodists Women's Society at the
church. At this meeting a second circle was organized. Called the Pathway Circle, it sought to serve those ladies who could most easily meet in the evenings.


A Parsonage Building Committee was established on March 30, 1969. The following persons constituted that committee: W. L. Hubbard, Chm., Ed Morris, Mrs. D. R. Everett, Mrs. N. E. Hainlin, and Mrs. C. W. Jones. Plans were approved on July 13, 1969. Construction on the parsonage began in late 1969, and by January, 1970, the parsonage was completed, and the Brantleys moved in. Various organizations of the church such as the Men's Club, W.S.C.S., and Sunday School Classes joined in providing furnishings for the parsonage. Help was also provided by individuals.

On August 31, 1969, the congregation celebrated the Sixth Anniversary of the organization of the Cliftondale United Methodist Church. Mrs. Judy Goddard baked a beautiful cake for the occasion and some of the former ministers were present for the anniversary celebration.

In September of 1969, Rev. Brantley initiated the publication of a monthly newsletter called the ADVANCE. An important communication medium, the ADVANCE has been continued across the succeeding years.

Through the gifts of members, the church purchased its first Organ in November, 1970. Mrs. Kate Heaton led in this effort. In this month also, Rev. Brinsfield conducted two evening services for the congregation, bringing with him the Rev. Harkie Kleinfelter, a minister from the "hip" community, and Mr. Howard Gardiner from the Atlanta Recovery Center.

At its May meeting in 1971, the Morning Circle of the W.S.C.S. named their circle The Macy Summerlin Circle in honor of Mrs. Summerlin. Also, in May, 1971, the W.S.C.S. presented a play entitled, "A Day With Charlie Brown." The cast included Mrs. Vickie Brantley as Charlie Brown, Mary Nell Uher as Linus, Jackie Jensen as Lucy, Shirley Satterfield as Schroeder, and Sarah Wallace as Snoopy.
By June, 1971, the church had grown to a membership of one hundred ninety-two full members. This was filling to capacity all existing facilities. Therefore, on March 30, 1961, a Building Committee was constituted to prepare plans for a new sanctuary and additional classroom space. In addition to the Chairman, Mr. A. P. "Pete" Jensen, members serving on this committee were as follows: R. F. Uher, A. L. Lewis, C.S. Mitchell, W. L. Hubbard, B. B. Gilliam, F. E. Heaton, Mrs. J. T. Sewell, Mrs. David Sanders, Mrs. J.D. Goddard, and Richard Peek. After considerable work on the part of this committee, trying to provide an adequate building at an affordable cost, a set of plans was finally adopted.

On June 13, 1971, a Charge Conference was called to approve plans for the new building, and to approve a loan not to exceed $100,000 for construction. Approval was given the Trustees to borrow the $100,000 from Fulton Federal Savings and Loan at a second Charge Conference held on July 14, 1971. At this conference the Trustees were also authorized to take such actions as were necessary to accomplish the construction. Ground was broken on August 8, and construction was begun soon afterward. By November the building was beginning to take shape.

In November, 1971, the W.S.C.S. sponsored the first Christmas Bazaar. Margaret Jones and Pat Sewell served as co-chairmen of this effort. It was so successful that in 1972 the Bazaar was made a church-wide project, and it has continued as an annual endeavor.

The Cliftondale Church experienced significant growth in many dimensions during 1972. One of these dimensions was our Professional Staff. In January of 1972, Mrs. Rita Gilliam, who had been serving for several months as a volunteer, was officially employed as Church Secretary. This action strengthened the ministry of the church and provided much needed assistance to the pastor. Also, in January, Dennis Samchok was employed as our first Director of Music. A music major at Georgia State University, Dennis brought very strong and capable leadership to this position, considerably strengthening the choral and music program of the church.

Another dimension was Mission Outreach. During the construction of our sanctuary, the Commission on Missions, together with Rev. Brantley, determined to assist in the construction of a church in the Philippines.
through the Advance Special Mission program. Under the leadership of Mrs. Zadie Copeland, the Commission sponsored Suppers, Flea Markets, Bake Sales, and other fund-raising projects through which $875 was secured to meet their mission commitment.

A third dimension was in Physical Facilities. Construction of the new Sanctuary and Educational Space, begun in 1971, was continued in 1972. A target date for occupancy was set for April 9, 1972. To help meet this target, men of the church worked long, hard hours trying to complete the interior furnishings. Work continued right up to the last possible minute. But on Sunday, April 9, 1972, the dream was realized -- the first services were held in the new Sanctuary and Educational Building.

At Morning Worship on April 9, 1972, the Sanctuary was consecrated and declared open for the worship of God. An Open House was held on June 25, 1972. A number of former pastors were in attendance.

Many of the furnishings of the new facility were made possible through the work or gifts of groups and individuals. The Pulpit, Lectern, Communion Table, and Suspended Cross were made by Dr. Neal Hainlin. The Communion Rails were made by Mr. Charles Mitchell. The chancel area of the Sanctuary was constructed almost entirely by men of the church. Pulpit Chairs, Pews, Guest Registry, Nursery Furniture, and the Baptismal Font were provided through donations from members, funds from the Todd Kortes Memorial Fund, and by organizations of the church. All together, these efforts produced a sanctuary of impressive warmth and beauty.

On June 23, 1972, Rev. Brantley was appointed to the Forest Park United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Richard D. Long became the sixth pastor of the Cliftondale Church.

As the Longs moved into the lovely new parsonage, the Parsonage Committee moved to complete its furnishings. New furniture was provided for bedrooms, and a lovely piece was provided for the entrance hall.

During July, the Macy Summerlin Circle of the UMW began furnishing the Elementary III-IV classroom as a memorial to Mrs. Thelma Ardeeser. New tables and chairs were secured as a part of these furnishings.

In August, 1972, a new advance was made toward programming for our church. All resident members were invited to participate in one of ten
geographically-arranged "Listening Groups." These groups of 12-15 persons met in members' homes, and defined the needs and directions for our church's future, sharing ideas and goals for its ministry. A report was compiled, listing suggestions and establishing priorities based on these group discussions. This report was distributed to all church families, and became the basis for future planning.

As a result of this effort, the Administrative Board adopted a Statement of the Mission and Purpose of Cliftondale Church as follows:

The Mission of Cliftondale Church is:

A. To make clear what the Christian Gospel is -- to our own people, and our community. To proclaim its promise of love, hope, strength, and salvation, and to lift up its demand for a God-centered life.

B. To provide a nurturing community -- an open, loving, fellowship -- in which persons might experience God's love and grow in an understanding of HIS purpose for their lives and HIS world.

C. To reach out in love to the unchurched of our community sharing God's love with them, and inviting them into Christian fellowship. And through The United Methodist Church, to extend this ministry to persons throughout the world.

D. To be an agent of understanding and reconciliation in a generation of change.

Goals were listed under each of these major missional objectives. And these goals became the priorities for the church's ministry during the coming year.

In October, 1972, the Cliftondale Church became the meeting place for the Brownie and Girl Scout Troops of the community. Also, in October, Mrs. Sylla Costner and Mrs. Emmie Rice began making a set of Paraments for the Sanctuary. Two sets had been completed by Christmas and the entire set by Spring. These added significantly to the beauty of our sanctuary.

The Adult Choir, under the direction of Dennis Samchok, presented a special Christmas Cantata on December 22, 1972. Assisting with this outstanding production were some of Dennis' friends from GSU.
The Church began 1973 with a fully-staffed leadership team, and with its first planned program of ministry for the year. Acting to implement planned goals, the congregation advanced on many fronts.

At this time, also, the church added a third person to its professional staff. Mrs. Jo Blalock, who had been serving as volunteer Organist, was officially employed for that position. This action reflected an increasing commitment to, and upgrading of, the church's music ministry.

Holy Week Services were held during the week of April 15-19. Rev. Robert Gillespie was guest preacher for the week. But the highlight of these services was the special Maundy Thursday Communion Service and Drama directed by Mr. Bill Floyd. Many members of the church participated in this dramatization of The Last Supper.

On May 20, 1973, all members of the church were invited to a "Spring Fling." Featuring informal worship, dinner on the grounds, and an afternoon of family recreation, the Spring Fling was greatly enjoyed by all.

On July 15, 1973, the church took another big step in adding a fourth person to its professional staff. In response to strong interest in an improved ministry with youth, our church employed the Rev. John R. Irwin as the first Director of Youth for our congregation.

Response to this action was very encouraging. By September, participation in Youth Ministry had greatly increased, allowing for the provision of both a Junior High and a Senior High program.

In late August, work begun much earlier on a new Parking Lot was culminated, and the lot was paved, providing parking space for approximately ninety cars. On Labor Day, September 3, 1973, approximately 73 men, women, and children joined hearts and hands to rake and seed the church lawn. With their combined efforts the task was accomplished in only half a day. By the end of September, shrubbery had been added to the front and side of the Sanctuary to give it a beautiful finished appearance. This effort was led by Mr. Charlie Rice, Chairman of the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

In September, a second informal recreation day, the "Fall Ball" was observed after the pattern of the Spring Fling, and with similar success.
On October 20, the Annual Bazaar was held. Scores of church people participated, and it netted a record profit in excess of $1800.

On December 16, the United Methodist Women presented a Chrismon Tree to the Church, beautifully decorated with Christian monograms they themselves had made. People of the church brought gifts for the Children's Home and placed them around the tree. A station wagon would hardly contain all the lovely gifts provided.

To effectively close out 1973, the Adult Choir presented an outstanding Concert of Christmas Music on December 23. And a Special Service of Watchnight was observed on December 31.

As Cliftondale Church celebrates its Tenth Anniversary on September 8, 1974, this congregation can thank God for his grace and the consecrated labors of many persons which together have brought the church to this point in history. We have indeed been richly blessed.

But the future of Cliftondale Church can be even brighter than her past. As we begin our eleventh year of Christian ministry, it will continue to be God's grace and the consecrated labors of the congregation of Cliftondale which will make this church an increasingly effective instrument for the expression of God's redemptive purpose.