CONFIDENCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Confidence United Methodist Church, near Avalon in Stephens County, Georgia, on Route 2, Toccoa, Georgia is on the Toccoa Circuit of the Gainesville District of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church.

In the years preceding the War Between the States, a small group of Methodists had for their meeting house a small one-room log building on the old Jarrett's Bridge Road which ran through the Eastanollee Community, as the road wound its rugged way from Carnesville, Georgia by way of Jarrett's Bridge, a covered span into South Carolina just across the Tugalo River. The name of the structure was Mount Carmel. It was used jointly for church and school.

The war took its toll, and the few Methodists left lived near another log schoolhouse known as Post Oak School, and sometimes Seven Oaks School. For a period of time, church, Sunday School, and day school activities were conducted there in this building which was located on the old Red Hollow Road which led from Toccoa to Lavonia. This schoolhouse was located one-half mile from the present location of Confidence United Methodist Church.

This church was organized in 1870. In the early 1880's there arose in the hearts of the loyal band of Methodists a fervent desire for a new church building. The following is taken from the original record:

Georgia, Franklin County, October 14, 1882

The M. E. Church at Confidence, being almost wholly without a meeting house to worship in, have appointed the following committee to solicit contributions for the purpose of erecting a
suitable house to worship in. The new one (is) to be built about one-half mile down the Red Hollow Road below where the old one now stands it being Seven Oaks School house. The contributions will fall due on, or by the first of November, 1882.

Those who wish can contribute labor or material or both, specifying which.

(The Committee) W. A. Cooper, J. L. Ertzberger, J. C. Holbrooks, John Stonecypher, W. L. McBath.

The list of contributors numbered 75 persons. The original members of the church were: M. Swilling, J. C. Holbrooks, Matilda Stonecypher, Jim W. Payne, Samantha Ertzberger, Martha W. McBath, Mrs. J. C. Holbrooks, Mrs. A. Patrick. These were the members up to 1873.

In 1874, and in the years immediately following, 36 members were added. The first funeral service conducted there was that of Jesse Holbrooks on April 9, 1883. The people attending the funeral sat about on the piles of lumber brought in for the new church. Reverend W. A. Cooper, in the chill stillness of that April day spoke the last rites for his neighbor, friend, and fellow churchman.

This church which served well its day of usefulness from the early 1880's until 1955 was replaced by a brick church a few yards north of the first structure. The church started on its own initiative. Why it was given the name of Confidence no one living now seems to know. Those living now who can remember Reverend Cooper could easily attribute the name to him. During his ministry he always lived in the church community and for long years afterwards, in fact the four churches on the Toccoa Circuit were Confidence, Prospect, Providence and Sunshine; and the writers vividly recall a saying of his concerning the four churches and their faith. It went something like this, in the meaning at least. "The members on the Toccoa Circuit have Confidence in the Providence of God that if they follow His
leading, there shall be for them a bright Prospect of Sunshine."

The present church located on Georgia Highway 17 is about 8 miles south of Toccoa. Its construction was begun in the spring of 1956 and was completed in 1960. Reverend Ryan Seawright was the planning pastor of this building and Reverend Douglas Harmon was the pastor during the most of the period of its construction. The building committee for this building consisted of the following persons in addition to the two ministers mentioned in the foregoing sentence: Paul Cooper, Harold Elrod, Daisy Hayes, Jewel Hayes, Annie Jane Martin, Paul Meadows, Dailey Swilling, Bert Taylor and Clyde Weaver. The church, although completed and completely paid for in 1960, was not dedicated until the spring of 1964 which was the first time we could secure the service of the Bishop.

The original land property for the church was a gift from Samuel Y. Swilling and Thomas M. Looney and it contained one and seven-tenths acres. The deed for it was dated October 15, 1881. It is recorded in the office of the Clerk of Stephens County under date of October 8, 1925. It is recorded in Book 15, Folio 340.

A deed dated December 1, 1920 lists one-half acre purchased from Mrs. Lillie Dean. This deed is recorded in the office of the Clerk of Stephens County in Book 17, Folio 334 under date of June 20, 1927. The amount the church paid for this land was $86.85.

A deed dated February 23, 1950 names a gift to the church of one-half acre donated by Mr. H. L. Price. This deed is recorded in the office of the Clerk of Stephens County in Book 46, Folio 285.
The activities of the church are continuously and faithfully carried on besides the regular and worship services include the Church School, Daily Vacation Church School occasionally, and National Holidays and special church seasons all with fitting programs.

The Women's Society of Christian Service was organized at the church in the fall of 1921, with Miss Estelle Hayes as president.

The church supports the ministry in important askings of the conference and the Methodist Children's Home. The spirit of fellowship is excellent.

On October 11, 1970, the 100th anniversary of Confidence was celebrated, at which time Bishop John Owen Smith brought the eleven o'clock message. Following the morning service "dinner on the ground" was served.

The afternoon program consisted of a history of the church and a service led by Bishop Smith and the District Superintendent, Cullen B. Jones. A stone marker was dedicated to the memory and in honor of the charter members.

The church simple, but beautiful in design, both inside and outside is in a setting which gives a feeling of peace and quiet, and sometimes a stranger—a passer-by sees the door open and enters in to worship there. That is what we would have it be—a church with a wide-open door, a church standing by the roadside among whispering pines, standing tall and straight, inspiring the hundreds who pass by every day to "Look up at the cross and live."

The source of the early days of the church recorded herein was furnished by the late Miss Lula Cooper who through the years after the death of her father in 1926 kept the books which were cared for by her father, the Reverend Armenius Cooper.

Jewel Hayes
Route 2
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