

HISTORY OF THE
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
DECATUR, GEORGIA

Decatur First Methodist Church is the oldest church in Decatur and the oldest Methodist Church in the Atlanta area, having been organized in 1823. Incorporated in 1830 by the Legislature it was known under the corporate name of "Decatur Methodist Episcopal Church." Although the wording of the charter has never been changed, its name later became Decatur Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

The building now housing the chapel was erected in 1897 and was given the name "Anderson Memorial," in honor of W. D. Anderson, Presiding Elder of the District in 1893-94. Sometime later, after unification of all Methodist Churches, we acquired the name we have used ever since -- "First Methodist Church of Decatur."

Prior to the construction of the new sanctuary and the Activities Building between Ponce de Leon Avenue and Columbia Drive, the church had been served by only three buildings. The original wooden building was erected on the site of the present chapel during the period of 1823 and 1826. No exact date can be placed on the construction of the larger structure which replaced the original building, but the best estimate is that it was built in the 1850s.

The Presbyterian Church was organized in Decatur in December 1825, and met in a log schoolhouse. The Presbyterians nor the Methodists had a Sunday School in the early days. In 1831 members of both churches established a joint Union Sunday School and opened it to all children in the county. Members of both congregations served as superintendents of the Sunday School, which was closed in July 1864 when Sherman's Army began to make its presence felt in the Decatur area.

In 1830 the Act of the Legislature which incorporated Decatur First listed as Trustees Jephtha V. George, Jesse P. Jones, Robert Ward, Larkin Carlton and Drury Fowler.

The Decatur Circuit in the 1830s and '40s included all that territory between Lithonia and Mayson's Ferry on the Chattahoochee River and included three camp grounds -- Mount Gilhead on the extreme west, Rock Chapel on the extreme East,

and Wesley Chapel six miles from Decatur. We know that the preachers in charge of the circuit in 1848 were John Yarbrough and James W. Hinton.

Decatur First Methodist formed its own Sunday School soon after the Civil War ended, about 1868, and its superintendents included (in order) V. R. Tommey, W. F. Patillo, J. Howell Green, and George M. Napier. After the Decatur Orphans' Home was established in 1872, approximately half of the children in our Sunday School were from the Home.

In 1908 the Orphans' Home established a Sunday School and its children were withdrawn from the church's Sunday School, reducing the average weekly attendance to about 75. The resulting campaign to bring the children of the church into Sunday School program quickly doubled its average attendance.

The house of worship, which is now called the Chapel, was begun in 1897 and completed in 1899. Upon its completion, the wooden building in which the congregation had been meeting was torn down.

The Rev. J. B. McCleskey was pastor when the Chapel building was begun and the Rev. T. C. Betterton was in the pulpit when it was completed. The cost of the construction was \$6,626.

Only 17 years after occupying the new sanctuary, the congregation had outgrown it, so construction started in March 1916 on the two transepts and was completed in November of that year. Exemplifying the rapidly rising cost of labor and material, the transepts cost \$11,000.00 -- nearly doubled the cost of building the church 17 years earlier. The Rev. Frank Quillian was serving the church at that time.

The pipe organ was added two years later at a cost of approximately \$3,000.00.

In the 1890s the parsonage was located on the north side of Sycamore Street midway between Candler and Church Streets. This lot and building were sold in 1903 for \$1,150.00 and a lot was purchased on the corner of Ponce de Leon Avenue and Barry Street. The parsonage was built in 1903-04 at a cost of \$1,825.00.

Under the pastorate of the Rev. G. M. Eakes, the first addition to the 1899 church plant was constructed in 1922, at a cost of \$27,000.00 adjoining the church building in the rear.

The adjacent lot to the west of the church on Sycamore Street -- known as the Filber property -- was bought in the mid 1920s for \$10,000.00 and the house used for several years as a Sunday School annex. During the Sunday School superintendency of L. M. Spruill a small white wooden building was erected on this property at a cost of \$2,000.00

During the pastorate of the Rev. Harvey C. Holland, Sr., a massive building program was initiated which resulted in the Filber home and the small white building being torn down and the present Sunday School building was erected adjacent to the old church building on Sycamore Street. This was done in 1948-49.

Despite an expenditure of \$214,000.00 for this new plant and renovation of the church, the facilities in 1950 were inadequate to serve the ever-growing congregation. In 1951, during the pastorate of the Rev. J. W. Veatch, the parsonage on Sycamore Street was purchased for \$28,500.00 and furnished for \$7,000.00, providing more room for Sunday School classes in the old parsonage on East Ponce de Leon.

As the congregation grew, the parking problem became more acute. In the mid-1950s the church purchased the property on the northeast corner of the intersection of Candler Street and East Ponce de Leon Ave. for \$16,500.00, using the house for young people's activities and the rest of the property for parking. This later was to become part of the block on which the new sanctuary is located.

In November 1956, during the pastorate of the Rev. R. Frank Crawley, the First Quarterly Conference convened and authorized the building of the Youth Activities Building and Sunday School plant on a portion of the block of property owned by the church, bounded on the South by East Ponce de Leon Ave., on the East and North by Barry Street, and on the West by Candler Street. This plant included the offices, classrooms, parlor, library, fellowship hall and kitchen. This building

was constructed at a cost of \$484,000.00, including architect's fees, financing costs, etc.

The Activities building containing gymnasium and Sunday School classrooms was constructed at a cost of \$135,000.00.

The Sanctuary including furniture, organ, pews, miscellaneous items such as changes in the educational plant for nurseries and offices, landscape, insurance expenses, interest on construction loan, and other finance costs made the total investment in the new sanctuary \$738,000.00. This sanctuary was consecrated on January 22, 1967, under the leadership and pastorate of Dr. W. Rembert Sisson.

On Sunday, September 21, 1969, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church, Decatur, Georgia, voted in a Church Conference duly called, accepting the gift from two members - Mr. Charles L. Davidson, Jr. and ~~Mr.~~^{Mr.} Dan B. Pattillo, of a new parsonage, located at 2596 McKinnon Drive, Decatur, Georgia, to be occupied by the pastor and his family at an early date. This was done during the pastorate of the Rev. L. Bevel Jones, III. The ^{Church}~~X~~ maintained possession of the parsonage located at 703 Sycamore Street, Decatur, until 1970, and during the year sold it for \$33,000.

NEW CHURCHES SPONSORED BY OUR CHURCH

ALLGOOD ROAD

ASBURY

BELVEDERE

GLENCO - now Columbia Drive

GLEN HAVEN

NORTH DECATUR

NORTHWOODS

SKYLAND

We purchased the lot for the North Decatur Methodist Church;

One member gave the lot on which Skyland Methodist Church was built;

One member gave the property on which a Church will be erected in the Glenwood-Columbia area.

We list below the Pastors and Presiding Elders who have served in this Church from the very beginning, and the name of the District we were in:

CHEROKEE DISTRICT

1834	. . . . .	Morgan Bellah
1835	. . . . .	W. Graham, P. P. Smith
1836	. . . . .	E. Bennett
1837	. . . . .	Abram Pennington, James H. McCarver
1838	. . . . .	Wyatt R. Singleton
1839	. . . . .	Alfred Dorman
1840	. . . . .	Alfred Dorman
1841	. . . . .	R. S. Wilson
1842	. . . . .	David L. Ballew
1843	. . . . .	Morgan Bellah
1844	. . . . .	Andrew Neese

LAGRANGE DISTRICT

1845	. . . . .	Osborne L. Smith
1846	. . . . .	James B. Jackson, T. H. Whitby
1847	. . . . .	John W. Yarbrough, James W. Hinton
1848	. . . . .	John W. Yarbrough, Alex M. Winn
1849	. . . . .	Noah Smith, Andrew Neese
1850	. . . . .	James T. Smith, John E. Sentill
1851	. . . . .	R. Lane, J. R. Owen
		Members: white, 303; colored 230
1852	Lewis J. Davies, Wm. M. Watts
1853	James H. Ewing

DAHLONEGA DISTRICT

1854	Thomas Boring
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ATLANTA DISTRICT

1855	Alfred Dorman
1856	J. M. Armstrong
1857	Marshall E. Malsby
		Members: white, 417; colored 24
1858	. . . . .	Newdaygate B. Ousley
1859	. . . . .	Thomas T. Arnold
1960	. . . . .	John H. Mashburn
1861	. . . . .	George Bright
1862	. . . . .	Benjamin W. Williams
1863	. . . . .	Henry Cranford
1864	. . . . .	J. J. Morgan
1865	. . . . .	J. J. Morgan, W. A. Dodge

1866-1873 - No Records

In 1874 in North Georgia Conference - had been in Georgia Conference. The first session was held in Atlanta, Ga., November 27, 1867. Bishop G. F. Pierce.

	<u>Pastors</u>	<u>Presiding Elders</u>
	<u>ATLANTA DISTRICT</u>	
1868	W. A. Dodge	T. P. Pierce
1869	W. A. Farris	A. G. Haygood
1870	W. H. Evans	A. G. Haygood
1871	C. A. Mitchell	W. H. Potter
1872	Francis Davis	W. H. Potter
1873	Francis Davis	W. H. Potter
1874	Francis Davis	W. H. Potter
1875	G. J. Pearce	James Evans
1876	J. A. Reynolds	James Evans
1877	W. F. Smith	W. F. Cook
1878	J. A. Reynolds	W. F. Cook
1879	A. C. Thomas	W. F. Cook
1880	W. P. Pledger	Jesse Boring
1881	W. D. Heath	Jesse Boring
1882	W. D. Heath	Jesse Boring
1883	J. B. Johnston	Jesse Boring
1884	J. R. Mayson	H. H. Parks
1885	W. M. Harris	H. H. Parks
1886	J. B. Johnston	H. H. Parks

	<u>OXFORD DISTRICT</u>	
1887	J. B. Johnston	G. W. Yarbrough
1888	L. H. Harris, A. G. Haygood.	G. W. Yarbrough
1889	L. G. Johnson	G. W. Yarbrough
1890	L. G. Johnson	G. W. Yarbrough
1891	P. M. Ryburn	R. J. Bigham
1892	P. M. Ryburn	R. J. Bigham
1893	P. M. Ryburn	W. D. Anderson
1894	A. W. Quillian	W. D. Anderson
1895	A. W. Quillian	Walker Lewis
1896	R. W. Bigham	Walker Lewis
1897	J. R. McClesky	Walker Lewis
1898	J. R. McClesky	J. S. Bryan
1899	T. C. Betterton.	J. S. Bryan

	<u>N. ATLANTA DISTRICT</u>	
1900	T. C. Betterton.	R. J. Bigham

	<u>ATLANTA DISTRICT</u>	
1901	J. B. Allen	R. J. Bigham
1902	J. B. Allen	R. J. Bigham
1903	C. H. Branch	Chas. E. Dowman
1904	C. H. Branch	Chas. E. Dowman

1905	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	C. H. Branch	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1906	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	C. H. Branch	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1907	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. F. Glenn	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1908	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. F. Glenn	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Joel T. Daves
1909	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. W. Duvall	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Joel T. Daves
1910	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. W. Duvall	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Joel T. Daves
1911	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. S. Bryan, J. M. Hawkins	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Joel T. Daves
1912	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. S. Bryan, J. M. Hawkins	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. P. Lovejoy
1913	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. S. Bryan, J. M. Hawkins	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. P. Lovejoy-
																												Rev. J. M. Tumlin		
																												supplied until Conf		
1914	Frank Quillian	W. P. Lovejoy
1915	Frank Quillian	A. M. Hughlett
1916	Frank Quillian	A. M. Hughlett

N. ATLANTA DISTRICT

1917	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. M. Tumlin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1918	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. M. Tumlin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1919	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. M. Tumlin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1920	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. M. Tumlin	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. H. Eakes
1921	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. H. LaPrade
1922	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. H. LaPrade
1923	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. H. LaPrade
1924	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. H. LaPrade
1925	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. L. Pierce
1926	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	G. M. Eakes	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. L. Pierce
1927	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. Quillian	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	W. L. Pierce
1928	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. Quillian	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	S. P. Wiggins
1929	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. Quillian	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	S. P. Wiggins
1930	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. S. Smith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	S. P. Wiggins
1931	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. S. Smith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Nath Thompson

DECATUR-OXFORD DISTRICT

1932	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. S. Smith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Nath Thompson
1933	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. S. Smith	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	R. Z. Tyler
1934	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Walt Holcomb	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Wallace Rogers
1935	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Walt Holcomb	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Wallace Rogers
1936	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Walt Holcomb	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Wallace Rogers
1937	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Wallace Rogers
1938	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	T. M. Sullivan
1939	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	T. M. Sullivan
1940	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	T. M. Sullivan
1941	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	T. M. Sullivan
1942	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	J. W. O. McKibben	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. H. Jones
1943	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	George M. Acree	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. H. Jones
1944	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	George M. Acree	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. H. Jones
1945	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	George M. Acree	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. H. Jones
1946	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	George M. Acree	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	C. L. Middlebrooks
1947	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. C. Holland, Sr.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	C. L. Middlebrooks
1948	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	H. C. Holland, Sr.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	C. L. Middlebrooks

1949	.....	H. C. Holland, Sr.	.....	C. L. Middlebrooks
1950	.....	H. C. Holland (to July 1, 1950)	.....	C. L. Middlebrooks

(The Conference Year changed to begin July 1(

1950	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1951	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1952	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1953	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1954	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1955	.....	J. W. Veatch	.....	E. G. Mackay
1956	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	J. Walker Chidsey
1957	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	J. Walker Chidsey
1958	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	J. Walker Chidsey
1959	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	Delma L. Hagood
1960	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	Delma L. Hagood
1961	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	Delma L. Hagood

ATLANTA-DECATUR-OXFORD DISTRICT

1962	.....	R. Frank Crawley	.....	Delma L. Hagood
1963	.....	W. Rembert Sisson	.....	Delma L. Hagood
1964	.....	W. Rembert Sisson	.....	Nat G. Long
1965	.....	W. Rembert Sisson	.....	Nat G. Long
1966	.....	W. Rembert Sisson	.....	Nat G. Long
1967	.....	L. Bevel Jones, III	.....	Nat G. Long
1968	.....	L. Bevel Jones, III	.....	Nat G. Long
1969	.....	L. Bevel Jones, III	.....	Nat G. Long
1970	.....	L. Bevel Jones, III	.....	Frank H. Prince

MEMORIALS

Many memorials have been given in the memory of or in the honor of some member of our Church. The first memorial was given by John W. Pearce which was a memorial window now placed in the rear of the pipe organ in memory of his mother, Eliza Ann Pearce. The tall brass altar vases were given in memory of Mrs. Mary Cantrell, who was President of the Woman's Missionary Society, President and teacher of the Woman's Bible Class and a Steward and leader in the Church. Hymnals have been given by many of our members in honor and memory of their loved ones. The cross on the Communion table was given by friends in memory of Mrs. J.A. Stewart. The light over the front entrance of the Church was given by Mrs. Vasser Turner (mother of our Mrs. Walter Herbert) in memory of her husband. The picture which is in the Junior Department was given in memory of the late Mrs. Leon Foote by her sister. The silver bowl which is used for the baptismal was given by Mrs. R.C. Ozmer in memory of her son, Vaughn. A memorial is being given by Mrs. John T. Goree and friends of the late John T. Goree, who was Chairman of our Board of Stewards and a prominent lay leader. The brass candlesticks on the altar were given by Mrs. J. Howell Green and her family in memory of J. Howell Green. The leather bound hymnal for the organist was given by Miss Frances Burgess in memory of Albert E. Dowman, who was for so many years a member of our choir. The Bible and Hymnal which are placed in the pulpit were given by the late C.E. Allen in memory of his mother and wife. Memorial collection plates were given in memory of Ensign William Henry Harris, who consecrated his life to the ministry but lost it in the services of his country, by his

mother, Mrs. Helen Culver Harris; also in memory of J.W. Queen by his wife; Wallace H. Cooper by his wife; Mrs. Mary J. Addy (grandmother of Harvey N. Addy); and in memory of loved ones in her family by Mrs. A.H.Wilson. Chimes were installed in our Church by a humber of our members as a memorial to certain deceased members. The beautiful Communion Service was presented to the Church on November 3, 1946 in memory of our deceased members. The brass urns were given by our Missionaries to China - Mr. and Mrs. Morris Paty. The beautiful picture "Adoration of the Shepherds" which is hanging in the brides' room was given by Mrs. Dan W. Shadburn in honor of her husband who is at present Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Church offices and Pastor's Study were decorated and furnished in honor of Mr. W.H.Weekes who is the sole surviving member of the original Building Committee of the Church in 1897 and who was for many years a member of the Board of Stewards.

Memorial services were held on January 13, 1946 for the following young men who made the supreme sacrifice in World War II; Lt. T.J.Deadwyher, Mr. , Lt. David Edge Jr., Lt. Ben S. Forkner, Jr., Ensign William Henry Harris, Lt. Robert J. Rogers, Jr. Lt. Richard Kennon Short, Jr., Lt. John D. Trimpi.

The beautiful Silver Communion Service was presented to the Church on November 3, 1946 in memory of:

Rev. J.M.Tumlin and Rev. G.M.Eakes, by Mr. E.A.Stead; Mr. John N. Newsome, Mrs. Annie L. Newsome, Mr. Newman Price Newsome and Mr. Billy Swann (who lost his life in the service

of our country) by Mr. and Mrs. H.T.Newsoms; Mrs. Leone Foote, by Miss Mildred Tilly; Mr. C.E.Allen, by Mrs. C.E.Allen; Mrs. Homer Allen and Mrs. H.B.Sasser, by Circle No. 4; Mr. Charles Collier, Mr. Lawrence Collier and Frank Shoup, Jr. by Mrs. Charles and Miss Louise Collier and Mrs. Ella Rhee Romport; Mr. F.O.Watkins and Mr. Raiford Watkiss, by Mrs. F.O.Watkins; Mrs. Oma Williams Johnston by Mr. W.P.Johnston, Sr.; Mr. T.E. Smith, by Mrs. G.A.Mason; Messrs Henry Harris, David B. Edge, Jr. T.J.Deadwyler, Jr., Ben S. Forkner, Jr., Robert J. Rogers, Jr., Frank Roberts, Kennon Short, who lost their lives in the service of our country, by Mr. Dan W. Shadburn, Dr. L.L.Tatum, Mr. and Mrs.W.C. Thompson; Rev. Henry Harris, by Mr. R.P.Chatham; Rev. J.M.Tumlin and Rev. G.M.Eakes and the memory of childhood and young ladyhood days spent in the work of this Church by Mrs. Sarah Paxton Tully; Mr. J.G.Addy by Mr. H.N.Addy; Mr. and Mrs. George N. Napier by Mr. Bob Hayes; Mr. Homer Wright by Mrs. Homer Wright; Mrs. Mary Bryan Kitchens by Miss Mary Bryan Coleman; Mr. and Mrs. W.J.Broome by Mr. W.L.Broome; Lt. Ben S. Forkner, Jr. by Mr. and Mrs. Ben S. Forkner, Sr. ; Rev. P.A.Kellett by Mr. and Mrs. Everitt Gorbandt; Mrs. Ella Cozart Trotti by Mrs. A.H.Wilson, Mr. Hugh H. Trotti and Mr. L.J.Trotti; Mr. S.H.Jacobs by Mrs. S.H.Jacobs; Rev. S.B.Ledbetter by Mrs. S.B.Ledbetter; Miss Caroline Napier by Miss Caroline Ledbetter; Mrs. J.C.Jones by Mr. Otis H. Jones; Mrs. Virginia Adell Threadgill by Dr. S.L.Threadgill; Mr. R.N. Daughtry by Miss Marjorie Daughtry; Rev. J.D.Milton by Mrs. J.D.Milton and Mrs. J.C.Maness; Mr. A.J. Woodruff by Mrs. A.J.Woodruff; Rev. W.H.Cooper and Rev. A.L.Hale by Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Hale;

Mrs. G.A.Almand by Mr. J. Hudson Almand; Others contributing were Mr. Frank G. Thomas, Miss Pauline Market, Mr. and Mrs. E.E. Haralson, Mr. C.P.Netherton and Mr. C.F.Johnston.

A picture "The Holy Night was presented to the Kindergarten Department by Mrs. George R. Jones in memory of her sister Miss Helen Coffee. Also the Nativity Set (made in Vienna Austria) was given by Mrs. Eugenia Poller of Vienna, in memory of her sister, Miss Helen Coffee, who served as superintendent of that department for fifteen years.

The Chimes in the Church were first played by Mr. Douglas Wauchope, organist at that time. They were dedicated in 1947 and were given by Mrs. G.M.Eakes, in memory of her husband who was pastor here for six years; Mrs. S.B.Ledbetter, in memory of her brother, Col. George M. Napier; Mr. E.E.Treadwell in memory of Rev. G.M.Eakes; Mrs. R.C.Ozmer in memory of her son Mr. Robert Vaughn Ozmer; Mrs. R.A.Broyles, Jr. in memory of her father and mother, Major and Mrs. W.R.Kent; Mr. and Mrs. J.A.McCrany in memory of Mr. Robert Vaughn Ozmer; Miss Mildred Tilley, in memory of Rev. G.M.Eakes; Mr. Joe Duvall, in memory of his father Rev. G.A.Duvall, who was pastor of this church in 1909 and 1910; Mrs. A.H.Wilson, in memory of the deceased members of the "Trotti" family; Mr. E.E.Treadwell, in memory of Col. George M. Napier; The Ethel Bryson Thompson Class in honor of the faithful members of the Choir; Also- contributions from the Choir, Mr. Milton Allen, Mr. Harrel Ringold, and Mr. Mell Turner.

The new lights were given by Mrs. John M. Bell and family in memory of Mr. John M. Bell.

The new pulpit was given by Judge Martin McFarland in memory of his father and in honor of his mother.

The new altar rail was given "To The Glory of God" in memory of Mrs. Julia K. Veatch and was dedicated on Easter Sunday 1956. Additional memorials for the new sanctuary will be found in "The Book of Memorials in the Narthex."

Prepared by
Mrs Orla Jones, Chairman
Historical Committee

June 1971
