HISTORY

of

DEMOREST METHODIST CHURCH
HISTORY OF

MEMOREST METHODIST CHURCH

Compiled by

N. Evie Gillespie

June 1951
HISTORY OF DEMOREST METHODIST CHURCH

The Demorest Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized about 1900. The town of Demorest was founded in 1889, and the church building was completed in 1901.

The early settlers of Demorest held their first Sunday School and church services upstairs in Mr. Henry Rossignall's home. This building later became a Girls' Dormitory for Piedmont College and was known as the Mary J. Green Hall.

A building was later erected on the west end of Georgia Street and was used for general purposes. Besides being used for school, it was used by all denominations for Sunday School and church services.

A Northern Methodist Church was built in Demorest in 1890.

The small number of families who belonged to the Methodist-Episcopal Church, South began plans for separate meetings of their group. Young John Ellis, Mrs. Walker House and Mr. John P. Brown organized the first Sunday School with John Ellis the first Sunday School Superintendent. Services were held upstairs in the Old City Hall. The next year Mrs. Phil Davis from Elberton, who was a teacher in the College, became the second superintendent, and services were held on the upper floor of Butler Hall which was then known as Town Hall. At that time there was no organized church.

This group began to feel the need of a church building for a place to worship and plans for constructing a church were discussed. There was doubt and uncertainty in the minds of some as to the advisability of this project but a few faithful ones were undaunted and with perseverance and faith they undertook the task of securing a location and erecting a building.
Captain J. S. Adams, a public-spirited townsman donated two lots but it was decided another lot was needed for the building desired so he gave the third lot. The deed to this property bears the date of 1901.

Funds were solicited for the building amounting to about six hundred dollars. Mrs. Wilson, a person of considerable wealth, gave liberally to this fund and her husband, a non-church member, gave his services in hauling lumber by mule team, from a near-by sawmill. This lumber cost from $7 to $10 per thousand. Much of the work on the building was donated. George H. Cason was foreman of the carpenters and received $1.50 a day for his work. Some of the other workmen working with him were Bert Helton, Sam Allen and Henry Stamey. Regular carpenters at that time received $.75 to $1 per day. Mr. G. S. Hunt was very active in this work and in addition to his business duties he saw to it that materials and supplies were available for the carpenters' use.

The first pastor was J. O. Brand, but he served before the church was built.

The church was sufficiently completed for use by the latter part of 1901 and Mr. Paul Ellis became the first pastor. He served from December 1901 to December 1902.

Preaching services were only once a month and the Pastor's salary was $100 a year.

There were some 15 or 20 charter members. Some of them were Mr. & Mrs. G. S. Hunt, Mr. & Mrs. J. P. Brown, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Ellis, Paul and John Ellis, Mr. and Mrs. Dolphus Askew, Estin and Minnie Askew, Mrs. Wilson, Mr. & Mrs. Walker House, Harvel and Inez House.

Rev. C. C. Spence, a Methodist preacher and formerly a missionary to the Indians, became president of the J. S. Green College in 1897.
In addition to his school duties he found time for ministerial work. His influence for good was far reaching in its effect and many young people felt the call to Christian service under his leadership. He was affectionately known as "Brother Spence" and often preached to the students and towns-folk. It was related that after a series of services which he had conducted in Butler Hall, while president of the College, some thirty persons became converted and asked for church membership.

One of these, Edward Taylor desired baptism by immersion. Brother Spence was glad to comply with his request. This Mr. Taylor became a loyal member of the church and served as steward for many years.

This church is unique in the fact that it is located in a college town and many times it has been both strengthened and assisted by faculty members and students of the college. Professor W. B. Smith, for thirty-five years a teacher at Piedmont College, was a consecrated christian and leader in the work of this church. He was an efficient Sunday School teacher and it was in that field of service that he made a most valuable contribution to the church. Dr. W. S. Roberts, Piedmont's outstanding chemistry teacher was also a member of this church and for many years taught one of its Sunday School classes.

The Demorest Methodist Church for forty-seven years did not have a full-time preacher, but was always a part of a charge; sometimes on the Cornelia work and sometimes on the Clarkesville charge.

Below is a partial list of the Presiding Elders and District Superintendents who have served these charges and Demorest Church:

M. L. Underwood
Ellison R. Cook
M. J. Cofer
J. Wiley Quillian
H. S. Edmonson
Claude Hendrick
McLowery Elrod
W. T. Hamby
J. G. Logan
H. C. Emory
J. F. Yarbrough
J. W. Veatch
James Foster Young
A. B. Elizer
G. D. Stone, Demorest's first mayor, was a Methodist preacher. Roy Sibley and Harvel House, sons of Demorest's "first" families also became Methodist preachers.

The first person recommended for license to preach after the church was established was John Estes Ellis. The date was June 18, 1901 and Rev. M. S. Underwood was Presiding Elder.

Within five years after the church was organized three persons from here had been recommended for license to preach.

An incomplete list of ministers who have served this church with dates gathered as accurately as possible are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907 - 1909</td>
<td>J. M. Tumlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910 - 1912</td>
<td>C. C. Spence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912 - 1914</td>
<td>John E. Ellis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914 - 1915</td>
<td>T. M. Sullivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915 - 1916</td>
<td>J. D. Milton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917 - 1925</td>
<td>L. B. Linn (Distinguished record of serving 9 years.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>J. L. Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>G. J. Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931 - 1933</td>
<td>O. J. Withrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934 - 1935</td>
<td>J. B. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935 - 1936</td>
<td>William H. Gardner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937 - 1940</td>
<td>C. Hoke Sewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941 - 1943</td>
<td>William Floyd Walden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944 - 1947</td>
<td>Clyde Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947 - 1951</td>
<td>Tim W. Holbrook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other church members, some of whom were here only during their connection with Piedmont College who have become Methodist ministers are W. R. England, Marvin Swilling, Jesse Warwick, Adrian Warwick, Sam Rogers, Beecher Pennington, Warren Lovett, G. M. Spivey, James Sanders, our present pastor, Tim W. Holbrook, was licensed to preach in this district.

W. F. Shoemaker, a superannuated minister of the Florida Conference, was for several years a member of this church.

E. E. Keener was for many years a resident of Demorest and a leader in church and Epworth League work. He has been outstanding in the field of Education and is now assistant to the Superintendent of Education of the Chicago City Schools.
From 1909-1910, Mayling Soone Chiang, who later became Madame Chiange Kai-shek, spent a year in Demorest attending the eighth grade which at that time was part of Piedmont College. She lived with a Mrs. Moss, a devout Methodist, and attended Demorest Methodist Sunday School and church with her.

From the records of the past it seems that there has always been an active Sunday School, sometimes small in number but meeting regularly and carrying on the work in organized groups with efficient leaders. A record of 1915 shows that there were twelve departments with an enrollment of 108, and an average attendance of 75. As already mentioned the first Superintendent was John E. Ellis. Mrs. Phil Davis was second. Mr. G. S. Hunt served next for a term of over 35 years. Mrs. Ross Clement held this office for 7 years. Wallace Bruce served for a time and Ernest R. Hallford was holding this office at the time of Federation of the Methodist and Congregational churches.

A Senior Epworth League was organized in 1903 by Col. Charles Bass of Clarkesville. A few of the charter members were: Joe Hope, J. N. Chambers, Knox Gillespie, Fletcher Pendergrass, Hugh Williams, Tom Chambers, W. B. Smith, Ruth Hamilton and Kate C. Pitts. For many years this continued as an active church organization. There was also a Junior League with a membership of about 25 or 30 boys and girls. The work of the Epworth Leagues was not continued without interruption as was the work of the Sunday School.

From the minutes of the first Recording Secretary's book the following is taken:

"The ladies of the M. E. Church South, Demorest, Georgia, met Wednesday December 5, 1906 for the purpose of organizing a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. The society was organized with the following members:
Mrs. Dillard, Mrs. Clara Jones, Mrs. Moss, Mrs. G. S. Hunt, Mrs. F. M. Pitts, Mrs. Pittman, Mrs. J. P. Brown, Miss Lizzie Dillard, and Miss Kate Pitts.

The following officers were elected:

- Mrs. Dillard----------------President
- Mrs. Jones-------------Vice-President
- Miss Pitts-------Recording Secretary
- Mrs. Minnie Moss---Corresponding Sec.
- Mrs. Hunt-------------------Treasurer
- Miss Dillard---Agent for Missionary Voice

The time of meeting was placed for Wednesday p.m. after the second Sunday in each month. There being no further business, the society adjourned to meet Wednesday, January 16, 1907.

Kate C. Pitts, Recording Secretary"

The members pledged 10 cents per month as dues, and contributed regularly to a special fund for the Laura Haygood Memorial in China.

Another record states: "The W. F. M. S. observed November 25 to 29, 1909, as a week of prayer. Object to promote growth and interest in Missions.

Monday met with Mrs. Wicker---Subject: China, Miss Bass - leader.
Tuesday met with Mrs. Bates---Subject: Korea, Mrs. Hunt - leader.
Wednesday met with Mrs. Ritchie---Subject: Japan, Mrs. Shoemaker, lead
Friday met with Mrs. Moss---Subject: Cuba

Had a public meeting Sunday night which was very interesting.

Mrs. Moss, Acting Secretary"

In the meantime the name had been changed to "Ladies Aid Society" for the minutes of January 29, 1917 state, "It was decided to change the name from "Ladies Aid" to Woman's Missionary Society."

The first officers of the Woman's Missionary Society were:

- President---------Mrs. M. E. Gill
- 1st Vice-President----Mrs. F. M. Pitts
- 2nd Vice-President----Mrs. W. F. Shoemaker
And so the work continued on down through the years. Much emphasis has been placed on both foreign and home missionary work. Each year as many of the prescribed study courses have been presented as could be arranged in a small society. The week of Prayer with sacrificial offering is always observed with fitting and impressive programs.

Individual pledge cards are signed by the members each year for both conference and local work.

After the unification of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist-Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church the name of the Woman's Missionary Society was changed to "Woman's Society of Christian Service."

Our meeting for this organization was held in the church September 9, 1940 during the pastorate of the Rev. Hoke Sewell. The charter members of the W. S. C. S. were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>Miss Virginia Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. W. B. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. G. S. Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. C. L. Sisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. L. F. Watson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Nola V. James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Evie Gillespie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Wallace Bruce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. T. K. Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. J. F. Hallford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Ernst Holdt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Eula Lee McKinney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Marvin Gillespie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. O. E. Flor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Ross Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Sarah Gillespie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Louise Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. J. W. Ritchie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. J. M. Brabson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. A. W. Brawner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Estelle Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Harold Hicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Christine Watson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This society has a record of which it is proud. Out of our membership in 1940 there came two conference officers of the newly organized Woman's Society of Christian Service. At the meeting organizational meeting in Marietta in 1940, Mrs. Marvin Gillespie was
elected the first president and held this office 1940-1943.

The same conference elected Miss Virginia Smith Corresponding Secretary. She served 1940-42. From 1942-43 Mrs. Wallace Bruce was the District Corresponding Secretary. She was elected District president in 1943.

We recall that Miss Marvine Gillespie, a recent graduate of LaGrange College, was made a life member of the Woman's Missionary Society in 1931 in recognition of the very fine work her mother was doing as Superintendent of the Children's Division of the church in the "Boy's and Girl's World Club."

For several years there was only one preaching service a month, the third Sunday morning. Later there were two services, the first Sunday night of each month and the third Sunday morning.

Those interested in church work along about 1940 thought it would be helpful to get the whole group, both young and old together oftener. So it was decided to have a fellowship supper in the church basement monthly on Monday night after the first Sunday. The pastor and his family, who lived at Clarkesville, always came when they could. The group was organized with a chairman and secretary and after a Pot-luck supper any business of the church that needed attention was brought before the group and acted upon. These monthly meetings were discontinued when our Church federated with the Congregational Church, but the federated church had meetings of a similar nature quarterly.

In 1947 the Demorest Church was on the Clarkesville charge with a membership of about 80 which included both active and inactive members.
Clarkesville was going to ask for a full-time pastor so other plans had to be made for Demorest. After much planning and careful consideration it was decided to Federate with the Union Congregational Church which also had a small membership. With the two groups pooling their resources and working together it was thought that a more far-reaching program for both churches could be carried on. A plan was worked out by which the Congregationalists pay one-third, the Methodists one-third, and Piedmont College one-third of the pastor's salary. The pastor serves as College chaplain and teaches one course in religion at the College. Each church retains its denominational connections and Methodists are as much Methodist now as ever. Services are held in the Congregational church. Each church keeps a separate roll and the women's societies meet separately except for special courses which are planned jointly, but both groups compose the membership of the Federated Church.

In October 1947, the fall meeting of the Gainesville District Woman's Society of Christian Service was held at the Federated Church. The Ladies' Guild of the Congregational Church assisted in entertaining them. At this meeting Mrs. Marvin Gillespie was made a life member of the W. S. C. S. and presented a pin in token of her service as first District president of that organization. All records are not available, but an incomplete list of those who have been presidents are:

Mrs. Dillard, Mrs. Moss, Mrs. M. L. Wade, Mrs. M. E. Gill, Mrs. J. J. Rampley, Mrs. O. E. Flor, Mrs. T. D. Williams, Mrs. W. B. Smigh, Mrs. J. W. Ritchie, Mrs. Marvin Gillespie, Miss Virginia Smith, Mrs. Wallace Bruce, Mrs. Addie Thomas, Mrs. E. R. Hallford, Mrs. Leslie Jones.

The society now has 21 active members. The work is well organized and interesting meetings are held each month. This year our conference pledge was $86.25. Mrs. T. D. Williams is the newly installed president for 1951.
The lots and original church building and church equipment still belong to the church. Last year, 1950, the Methodists purchased from the Congregationalists the parsonage. It is valued at $6000 and is now occupied by the Rev. Tim W. Holbrook and his family.

Since Federation an organ has been added to our church. The Katherine Reynolds Memorial Chimes were dedicated in April of 1951. These add much to the worship of church and the community.

In 1947, the last year before federation the pastor's salary was $480 and the total amount paid for all purposes was approximately $650.

At the present time the Methodist membership is about ninety. A well-rounded program is carried out. Mrs. T. D. Williams is chairman of the Board of Stewards, and Miss Evie Gillespie is Church Secretary.

From our church and Church School have gone out some of the finest workers in Methodism--ministers, laymen, teachers, business and professional men and women; citizens of whom any community may be justly proud.

Through the continued cooperation of all groups in the church we look toward the future and a great opportunity to serve. We look to the past with a spirit of deep gratitude for what has been accomplished during these fifty years of church growth.
This History compiled from the following:

Interviews and References

Mr. G. S Hunt
Mr. Stan Carpenter
Mr. George H. Cason
Rev. John Ellis
Mr. J. N. Chambers
Mr. J. K. Gillespie

Record Books

Church Register
Sunday School Secretary Books
Woman's Missionary Society Secretary Books
Minutes--North Georgia Annual Conference

(Miss) Evie Gillespie, Historian