A HISTORY OF THE

DULUTH FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20

BY
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Being the only surviving direct descendant of W.E. Jones and a fourth generation Methodist from the founding of our Country, I am reminded of much that has occurred in my sixty odd years.

Since a void in the Church history exists due to a fire in 1942, I shall attempt to fill in some highlights as related by others and observed first hand. I have seen whole families arrive at Church in a two horse wagon and have watched a Christian land on the moon. Should as much change take place in the same time frame to follow, this world will be something to behold.

It is difficult not to editorialize in a situation of this sort. Your indulgence is appreciated.

The results of this effort is presented to the Duluth First United Methodist Church. Should the Church see fit to accept, it is authorized to use all or any part. Any benefits arising therefrom shall accrue to the Church.

W.M.J.
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CHAPTER I

The Conception

One hundred and six years ago in 1871, on a stormy Sunday afternoon, a small band of people met to organize a Methodist Church. The meeting was held at the residence of Singleton G. Howell and Agnes J. Howell. Other charter members were: H. W. Howell, Dora Howell, Cynthia Knox Howell, J. J. Herrington, W. E. and Laura Howell Jones. Reverend G. R. Kramer conducted the meeting, continuing to serve as Pastor through 1873.

Services were held in the Howell home until sometime in 1873 when the first church building was erected.

Mr. John W. "Buck" Knox, a young fellow in his late teens, almost became a charter member. A severe thunder storm prevented his attending the first meeting as he lived about two and one-half miles out the Duluth-Lawrenceville road. Mr. Knox went on to hold every official position in the Church, serving as Sunday School Superintendent more times than anyone and being the Church song leader for perhaps sixty years. He lived to sing.

Although the settlement had existed for quite sometime, the nearest churches in that point in time were Warsaw and Mt. Zion Methodist and Sweetwater Primitive Baptist of which Evan Howell was a member.

Since he had recently come to the community to enter the mercantile business with his brother-in-law, Robert N. Rogers, from Mt. Zion Church and since his parents and grandparents were charter members of Shiloh Methodist established in Forsyth County in 1842, replacing the old log building in 1866, immediately following the war between the States, one is inclined to believe that W. E. Jones, born and reared in sight of the Church, with the enthusiasm of youth, might have provided the impetus needed to found a Church in Duluth.

CHAPTER II

Others To Be Remembered

Others that have had an important part in the development of the Duluth Methodist include: John E. Lowe, George W. Lowe, W. B. Rutledge, J. A. Dodd, the Newborn family, Miss Hattie Green, Miss Sallie Hall, Mr. & Mrs. Vines Allen, Mr. & Mrs. W. R. Respess, Mr. & Mrs. Wm. T. Little, Mr. & Mrs. Charles A. Strong, Jesse and Myrt Payne, L. E. Payne, John D. & Clyde McDaniel, Gladys W. and Allen Brown, J. G. Taylor, Hulon I. Jones, Y. J. Harrington, Sr., Mrs. Mattie Dodson, Rembert A. Green, Fred Bunten and H. S. McCurry.

J. G. Taylor attended college for a while but came back to be a farmer. He was a good Bible scholar and truly mourned by his Sunday School class when cancer took his life.

Rembert Green first came to Duluth in 1924 as part of the parsonage family of H. O. Green. He returned in 1933 as principal of the school, moving upward in the educational field to the City of Atlanta, not only to teach but later to preach also. Anticipating retirement, he again returned to Duluth where the Master one day called him home. The Church lost a lot of ability that day.

Although they are still in life, it is proper that two other members be included in this recording, in as much as, declining health prevents further active participation. Willie Knox Summerour, a dedicated professional music teacher and Church pianist for
Chapter II continued


Further personal reference to any member now living will be omitted, except to establish a fact, as most are still considered active members.

CHAPTER III

Sanctuaries

First Sanctuary

The land for the first sanctuary located on Peachtree Street was donated by Singleton G. Howell.

Erected in 1873, it originally consisted of one large room with vestibule inside the main door. Doors on the right and left led inside, with pews on either side and in the center. The pulpit protruded into the room with bannistered railing around the elevated stage.

Marion Roberts was the carpenter in charge. Close inspection will convince one that master craftsmen performed excellent work without benefit of today's modern tools. It is assumed that most of the materials were furnished locally as there were plenty of virgin forest at that time. The pews were no doubt made on the job from boards possibly up to 24 inches wide. Other more comfortable pews replaced the originals some seventy or more years later.

The wings for Sunday School rooms were added to each side of the building in 1921. Prior to that time some classes were curtained off with wires running across the room, while others would get in far corners so as to minimize voice competition.

The annex to the rear was completed in 1954 at a cost of $11,560.00. This addition converted into three class rooms with separate kitchen and two baths. Sometime later the men dug themselves a room under the annex.

Hoping they would preserve it for posterity, the building and .99 acre of land was sold to Duluth Lodge No. 480 F. & A. M., in January 1966 for $10,000.00.

Second Sanctuary

In 1959 under the pastorate of Gilbert Steadham, discussion was initiated to construct a new building with more parking spaces and facilities for other activities.

Rev. J. B. McNeil received the appointment in 1959. He took on the task with zeal and determination. Under this leadership the congregation was able to hold the initial service on April 16, 1961.

Land for the new Church facilities on Highway 120 at Norman Lake Road was given by Calvin M. Parsons, Jr., Jack E. Sharpton and William M. Dodson. Total acreage is 8.71 with an appraised value of $20,750.00 at that time.

Donations, pledges and finally a Bank loan was used to pay for construction and related expense. Cost, not including furnishings, amounted to $120,345.00. The bell in the tower is removed from the old Church. No problems were encountered in paying the loan. The mortgage was burned and the Church was dedicated August 11th, 1968.

The furnishings and equipment are itemized but not extended as to dollar value.
CHAPTER IV

Parsonages

First Parsonage
Circa 1900-1910 was located on North Lawrenceville Street, presently occupied by home of Mr. & Mrs. Marion Corley.

The land was contributed by Dr. E. G. Ware, a Baptist, for his daughter to have a close neighbor. At that time the Ware home was the furtherest house away from town.

The Parsonage contained five rooms with center hallway, front and rear porches, all frame construction. Most of the lumber for the Church and Parsonage was furnished by the members. All the timber was virgin at that point in time.

There was a barn for horse, buggy and cow along with a garden plot. The buggy space later gave way to the Minister's auto.

Late on Sunday afternoon December 20, 1942 the original Parsonage and barn burned. The Pastor, Allen A. Phillips, and family were out at the time. All the family had left was the clothes they were wearing.

All Church records were destroyed at the time which prevents presenting a more factual history. Much that is presented here is from recollection of persons born after 1890.

Second Parsonage
The United States was actively engaged in World War II at the time. Permission from the War Production Board was required as all materials were under its control. While approval of the W.P.B. was being pursued, other volunteers from the Charge were soliciting cash contributions.

Guy Findley and Allen Phillips scouted the Duluth-Warsaw-Mt. Carmel Charge begging timber on the stump. They were persuasive and successful. The Clement brother and sister gave some virgin timber, clear of knots all the way. With some donated labor, Hulon Jones and Guy logged Hulon's mill for sawing. Hulon trucked the clear lumber to Atlanta for kiln drying and dressing. It was made into weather boarding, paneling and trim.

Thanks to the combined effort of many people, the Phillips family was able to occupy their new home in July 1943, a brief span of seven months. The good Lord gave His approvals all the way. Total value of all materials and labor $2,471.00.

This property was sold to the present owner in 1963. Warsaw and Mt. Carmel were remitted their interest in the appraised value of the dwelling only, based on the percentage of their participation. The balance was applied to the cost of the new brick parsonage that follows.

Third Parsonage
The new brick parsonage located in the Church campus, facing Norman Circle, was completed and occupied in 1963 at a cost of $26,000.00. Furnishings not included.
Cemetery

Mr. Singleton G. Howell also donated approximately 2 acres for the cemetery adjacent to the old Church on Peachtree Street. His family plot is the third on the right from the entrance. His father, Evan Howell, the original settler of the community was first interred in a small family plot on his plantation near the Chattahoochee. This was not an uncommon practice in the early times. Later his remains along with several others were transferred to the Methodist Cemetery.

The Methodist and Baptist cemeteries are separated by a twelve foot alley.

A bequest of $500.00 was received by the Church from the estate of Dolet Strickland Allen in 1962. This gift was to be used for maintenance of the cemetery. Accordingly, the Dolet Strickland Allen Memorial Fund was created by resolution of the official Board to receive funds for perpetual care of the cemetery.

Through bequests, gifts and other sources the fund now exceeds $12,000.00. While the income for the present is adequate, it is feared that inflation will limit the attention it is now receiving.

Veterans and military personnel of the War between the States, World Wars I and II are buried there. Also, many old time residents of the area are no longer represented by descendents here or otherwise. There are a number of unmarked graves of persons who shall forever remain unknown.

CHAPTER VI

Districts and Associated Churches

Duluth First United Methodist Church has been known as: Duluth Methodist Episcopal Church South and Duluth United Methodist Church. It remained in the Gainesville District of the North Georgia Conference for many years. In 1962 it was transferred into Atlanta-Emory, becoming a part of the Atlanta-Chamblee in 1977. The District Superintendent was originally titled Presiding Elder.

At one time there were five churches on the Duluth Charge: Duluth, Suwanee, Level Creek, Mt. Zion and Meadow. Some of necessity had afternoon appointments. Prior to becoming full time in 1963, the Charge consisted of Duluth, Warsaw and Mt. Carmel.

There was a time when the Pastor received his salary quarterly. Just prior to the Quarterly Conference, the Stewards would call on their particular list to raise the money. The money received was called quarterage. Indeed, some members only gave a quarter. At the final Quarterly Conference, any shortage was personally made up by the Stewards of their respective churches in order to pay out. Sometimes it would take a little scurrying around.

After the morning sermon by the Presiding Elder, Dinner was spread on the ground, followed by the business session in the afternoon. The tables were piled high with all kinds of delicious food that would put today's Church or Family Night Supper to shame. "Dinner on the ground" meant outside under the trees.

Sometimes the P.E. would come down from Gainesville on the morning train and return by the same manner in the evening. This train was known as the "Airline Belle". Oftentimes he would have breakfast with one of the Stewards. This was an occasion for country fried steak, cream gravy, homemade biscuits, fresh butter and preserves.
Chapter VI continued

When attending Quarterly Conference in Suwanee, one could board train No. 12 and return on No. 11 in the late afternoon. Horse and buggy was the favorite way to travel until around 1914.

CHAPTER VII

Revivals

Duluth was essentially a farming area until World War II in 1941 introduced industrial assembly to Atlanta and environs. Row crop farming had already become unprofitable and soon faded from the scene.

During the agricultural era, which was from the beginning, it was customary to have a summer revival meeting. The "Protracted" Meeting, as some were wont to call it, might last one or two weeks. Morning and evening services were held, most times with a visiting Preacher and sometimes a song leader. However, Mr. John Knox led the singing many more times than anyone else. The evening sermon was usually preceded by a song service of about thirty minutes to get the congregation in groove. Great and lively singing it was with "Miss Willie" at the piano.

There weren't any screen on the windows and the air conditioning consisted of hand held fans furnished by the local Funeral Director. Some of the ladies had folding Japanese fans suspended on chains or cords around their necks.

The heat didn't deter anyone, not even the preacher. A glass and pitcher of water were at hand. He would shuck his coat and proceed to "tell it like it was".

Public testimony and confessions were given. Several of the members were prone to shout. Public prayer by various members was the rule rather than the exception and here again certain members would shout.

Visiting preachers and song leaders were housed and furnished breakfast at the local boarding house. The noon and evening meals were taken with the membership and, of course, the party included the local Pastor.

The same type revival would be held by the Baptist and occasionally the Presbyterians would hold a summer tent meeting. All revivals were attended back and forth by the three Churches.

CHAPTER VIII

Sidelights and Observations

For many years special music included duets by Mrs. Mattie Christian, (Soprano), and Mrs. Jesse (Myrt) Payne, (Alto), with "Miss Willie" accompanying. There was a boys soprano choir, possibly around 1920.

The Ladies Missionary Society met at the homes of its various members. The hostess usually outdid herself in providing refreshments. It appears to have merged into the United Methodist Women of today.

It might be said that the Board of Stewards operated in the same manner. The number usually ranged from five to seven. The Church roll as compiled by Reverend Pledger Parker in 1951 lists two hundred and eleven. Today there are 648 members whose church affairs are managed by the Administrative Board of some twenty-five or more.
Chapter VIII continued

Epworth League has given way to United Methodist Youth Fellowship where recreation and refreshments appear to be the dominant parts of the program. In by-gone days recreation associated with attendance at Epworth League, Revivals and Sunday night services consisted of a young fellow walking his best girl home.

Wednesday night prayer meeting with good participation was a regular feature of the Church program for several decades. Then along came TV.

For quite sometime it was customary for the ladies to enter from the right and sit on the right with their small children. The men or husbands would enter from and sit on the left. The young folks occupied the center section. Mr. & Mrs. Respess moved to Duluth shortly before the turn of the century. They sat together in the center pews and held hands. From that time on more and more couples began sitting together. However, some held to tradition until their demise.

In times past the song leader directed the congregation in song. He has been replaced by the choir director who leaves the congregation to fend for themselves. Booth Poole, a strong baritone, was the last director-leader -- so far.

Summer singing schools were the order of the day in early nineteen twenties. A travelling singing teacher would pass through and hold a school for the boys and girls at one of the Churches. All parts were taught during the two week sessions.

There was a period when membership in the Church was preceded by conviction and public confession. Today one gets the impression it is by negotiation and printed ritual.

CHAPTER IX

Our Neighbors

Some years ago the white and black citizens visited one another quite often. It was not uncommon for the rear pews to be occupied by colored friends during revival and other services. There were many times when whites would visit Mt. Ararat Methodist Church which stood across the street to right rear of the present Bank of Duluth.

"Uncle Bendy" Strickland was a regular at Duluth Methodist Sunday Service. He came dressed in a white shirt, long tail coat and derby hat. He would often preach at the main corner in old town Duluth. He was arrested for preaching on the street in Washington, D.C. long before some of the late prominent black ministers were born.
Eugene Brown, son of Gladys and Allen Brown, chose the ministry. Upon completion of his education he joined the Holston Conference. He later transferred his allegiance to another denomination.

Edwin McGee joined Duluth Methodist while a youth. After moving away, he entered the ministry via another denomination.
CHAPTER X

The Pastors

Including Reverend Kramer, fifty-two ministers have filled assignments to Duluth

1. G. R. Kramer 1871-73
2. M. H. Eakes 1874-76
3. Joseph Carr 1877
4. J. R. Smith 1878
5. W. P. Smith 1879
6. H. S. Bradley 1880-81
7. J. H. Mashburn 1882-85
8. H. M. Newton 1886
9. J. T. Curtis 1886
10. W. M. Milner 1887-88
11. M. W. Arnold 1889
12. W. F. Robeson 1890
13. Thomas M. Cobb 1891
14. L. P. Neese 1891
15. J. W. Quillian 1892-94
16. W. B. Dillard 1895-96
17. C. S. Weathers 1897
18. E. C. Marks 1898-1900
19. W. L. Singleton 1901
20. F. G. Golden 1902
21. W. W. Gaines 1903-04
22. W. E. McBreyer 1905
23. S. A. Braswell 1906-07
24. F. R. Smith 1908
25. J. W. Stipes 1909-10
26. A. E. Scott 1911
27. Z. V. Hawkes 1912-13
28. M. B. Whitaker 1914-15
29. W. H. Speer 1916
30. T. L. Rutland 1917-20
31. D. S. Patterson 1921-23
32. H. O. Green 1924-25
33. J. W. Coffman 1926
34. A. E. Silvey 1927
35. C. M. Verdel 1928-29
36. C. M. Haynes 1930
37. N. O. L. Powell 1931-34
38. J. H. Couch 1935
39. B. N. McHan 1936
40. W. A. Pilgrim 1937-38
41. J. A. Griffies 1939
42. A. A. Phillips 1940-43
43. J. H. Allison 1944-45
44. Lamar Cherry 1946-48
45. Pledger W. Parker 1949-51
46. Joseph Faulkner 1952-54
47. Gilbert Steadham 1955-58
48. J. B. McNeil 1959-61
49. John Bridges 1961
50. J. B. McNeil 1962-63
51. Wilton Moulder 1964-69
52. Clyde A. Lancaster 1969-76
53. Charles H. Duffy 1976-80
54. Charles W. Barnes 1980-