A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DUNWOODY METHODIST CHURCH
Dunwoody, Georgia

Compiled by Miss Margaret Miles
August 1953

Fifty years ago the people of Dunwoody and surrounding territories met each Sunday for a Sunday School session in the public school building. Once each month Mr. Eakes, the pastor of the Atlanta Heights Circuit, delivered sermons, the people sang and prayed, offerings were taken and God’s Presence was felt in the school house. But, Christians want a place to worship that is set apart from other public places, a place dedicated to God. And so, during the Third Quarterly Conference of the Atlanta Heights Charge, on August 18th, 1903, a committee of Dunwoody citizens was appointed for the purpose of securing a site for a church. Serving on the committee were: J. R. Cates, S. H. Spruill, W. H. Welch, A. N. Burnham, and John Hargree.

On August 31, 1903 the above committee submitted the following petition: "We, the undersigned building committee sets forth in this petition to build a M. E. Church, size 20' X 60' X 14', on an acre of land, donated by Mr. J. R. Cates, which lies opposite the Graham place. We solicit your help."

Some weeks passed, weeks that were filled with plans, prayers and much discussion. And, on October 8, 1903, a called session of the Quarterly Conference of the Atlanta Heights Charge was held at Dunwoody by authority of the Presiding Elder, C. E. Dowman, for the purpose of receiving plans and estimates of cost of a church building in Dunwoody. Mr. J. W. Hardigree, the chairman, submitted the plans of the building committee as follows:

"...a house 30' X 50' X 14', ceiled overhead only, seated, painted, etc.... cost $500.00".

This amount was shown to be covered by subscriptions considered good. On motion, the committee was voted unanimously the right to build. W. M. Spruill, J. R. Cates, and L. E. Copeland were elected Trustees. J. R. Cates assured the Conference that he would give the land and was ready to make the deed at any time incorporating in it the "trust clause" or its equivalent as required by the Methodist Discipline. The minutes of this conference were signed by "J. T. Eakes, P. C."

The church was built with donations on money, materials, and labor.

On February 20, 1904, Dunwoody M. E. Church joined Sandy Springs, Sardis, Pleasant Hill, Winters Chapel and Oak Grove Methodist Churches. The amount of $8.50 was raised for the support of the pastor.

In March, 1904, the Dunwoody Church was dedicated. From October 8, 1903 to November 15 of the same year thirty-two persons were received into the church. Twenty-three by certificate and nine by vows. The charter members are as follows:

In the minutes of the Second Quarterly Conference in 1904, we find recorded, "...Dunwoody has good Sunday School, a new bell has been placed in the church tower and large audiences mornings and evenings."

Within a few years the need became apparent for a parsonage to be located nearer the churches of the charge. With this in mind, five acres of land, located across the street from the Dunwoody Church was purchased. On this site a large parsonage was built and in 1907, Rev. E. W. Jones, the pastor of the Circuit, moved to Dunwoody.

The Circuit continued under this plan until 1926 when it was decided that the Circuit should be divided. In that year, Dunwoody and Winters Chapel became a two-point circuit with Sharon Church as an afternoon and fifth Sunday preaching appointment. At the time of separation, the Trustees of Dunwoody and Winters Chapel paid a sum of $500 to the churches of Sardis and Sandy Springs in order for the parsonage to become their property. Rev. A. E. Barton was the first pastor under the new plan.

The Dunwoody Church continued to meet the spiritual needs of the community not only of the adults, but also of the children. This fact is evident in the minutes of the Quarterly Conference in 1932 when Rev. Claude Singleton stated, "The pastor, feeling that we have not been giving the children sufficient recognition, has been taking a few minutes before the Sunday morning sermon, with few exceptions, to tell stories to the children and encourage them in religious growth. We feel that certainly this has been worth the time and effort."

As the children continued to attend the Sunday School and Church in large numbers it became necessary to think of building classrooms. As the need became more urgent, the Sunday School Superintendent, Miss Gladys Austin, decided to start a birthday bank to help finance an expansion program. The rooms were to be built in the back of the church. However, when the seasonal gales ruffled the roof shingles as it would the feathers of a moulting hen, and the building shuddered on its aging pillars, it was evident to all that it would be the part of wisdom to build a new church.

In the Quarterly Conference on November 21, 1933 the building committee at Dunwoody was authorized to proceed with a new church building at Dunwoody. In 1935 plans were made for the new church building to be located on a part of the original parsonage property. With the money accumulated over a period of five years and that obtained from the sale of the old church building and the acre of land on which it stood, the new building was begun. Fortunately, among the church members there were skilled laborers who were willing to give of their time and experience toward the erection of the new church.

In 1941 the Building Committee reported: "Since the last Quarterly Conference, we have made gratifying progress on the building project at Dunwoody. We have brought the Sunday School plant in the basement near enough completion so that we have been able to occupy the classrooms. The work of the classes in the Sunday School has thus been greatly improved. Moreover, the Board of Church Extension of the North Georgia Conference at the Annual meeting last November gave us a grant of $200 in order to help us bring our building to completion. Consequently,
we have put on a drive to raise enough money by Easter to buy and install our permanent pews. The pews have been selected and ordered, and they are now in process of being made at the factory.

There is no debt on the building. We have followed a pay-as-you-go policy, and are now in sight of the end without any indebtedness.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arva C. Floyd, Chairman

The new church was dedicated by Bishop Arthur J. Moore in 1948.

(In 1953 the need became apparent that additional Church School space must be provided. An "investigation committee" composed of Harvey Womack, Lee S. Wolfe, Harold Bullard, and L. P. Wilburn was named. Their investigation revealed that additional space should be provided immediately. Months later, after discussion, prayer, planning, etc., necessary disciplinary procedure was followed and on August 3, 1954 work was begun on an addition to the church building 33' X 55', two stories. Thirty thousand dollars was borrowed by the church for the new structure. The building provided six new classrooms, a dining area, a church kitchen, toilets, and a pastor's study. In addition, the sanctuary was enlarged so as to accommodate 100 additional persons. Serving on the Committee with the four named above were: C. C. Eidson, G. R. Vinson, C. V. Marchman, and Glenn T. Austin. Rev. Win. Echols is at present the pastor, having been appointed to Dunwoody in 1952. The new building was put into use in January of 1955.)

Under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Reynolds W. Greene, Jr., representatives of Dunwoody and Winters Chapel met for the purpose of dividing the Circuit that each church would become station charges. The amount of $2,000 was paid to the Winters Chapel Church for their part of the parsonage and land. Dunwoody was for the first time a church on its own with a full-time pastor as leader.

As time passed, the old parsonage began to show an inclination to recline. And, in 1950 plans were completed to construct the parsonage which is now next door to the church. The construction of this residence attracted wide attention for its uniqueness. It was a ready-to-be-assembled building. On a day in the late summer of 1950 more than 30 men gathered for the house raising. At the end of the day the walls were up, the roof on, the flooring down, and most of the windows in. Although weeks of work were yet to be done, the major portion of the parsonage was built that day. The noon meal was served by the ladies in the basement of the church.

The cost of the parsonage was $8,000.