HISTORY

of

Lithonia Methodist Church

by

Mrs. Charles J. Tucker

1953
As early as 1850 there were in this community two men of different faiths and both were ministers of the gospel. One was a Baptist, who bore the name of James R. George, the other a Methodist whose name was Henry Clark. They evidently lived on neighboring farms and traveled together a great deal. Mr. Clark was a local preacher and preached in Lithonia quite often. The meetings were held in brush arbors. These arbors were in a grove where the first church building was erected.

Mr. Clark soon felt there ought to be a Methodist church building in Lithonia and he talked it over with his friend, Mr. George, saying that he hardly knew how and where to begin. Mr. George said, "I know a man who will give you a plot of ground." That man was none other than Mr. George himself. Not only did he give the land but also a liberal donation of money.

On the roll of the Rock Chapel Church in the year 1860, we see that a number of members were transferred to Lithonia. So, from those records, we feel sure that the Lithonia Methodist Church was organized in 1860. Unfortunately, we have no records of early years of it's existence. Our Mother Church, Rock Chapel, has her records back to 1846, the year she was organized. It is interesting to see that the absences and attendance of church-going were recorded, the fast days, and so on.

In the list of those transferred from Rock Chapel to Lithonia we find the names of Bond, Chupp, Braswell, Duncan, Cleland, Welborn, and Evans.
Jacob Chupp was a man of piety and liberality. He gave the bell that hangs in the belfry of the building today and also the beautiful walnut altar rail. The Lithonia Church has two daughters - Rockland, which was established in 1893, and Redan, established in 1894.

The church has given two of her sons as ministers of the gospel; Mr. L. Underwood and C. A. Norton. Also, a daughter, Anita Moore Billingsley, who has volunteered for service. Her husband is preparing to be a medical missionary.

The Lithonia church was in a circuit until 1926, when it became a station.

In 1860, Thomas T. Arnold was the pastor. Some who have served as pastors are W. A. Dodge, W. F. Quillian, J. S. Bryan, W. A. Parks, G. K. Quillian, W. P. King, Marvin Williams, G. W. Barrett, A. A. Quillian, W. S. Norton, L. F. Van Langingh. The pastor now is H. A. McNeil.


The original one-room structure was used until 1910. No alterations have ever been made, except a vestibule added and two small Sunday School classrooms on either side of the vestibule. The value of this building was $1,500.

During J. A. Quillian's pastorate there began to be some plans made for a new building. The May, 1910, records of the quarterly conference, W. P. King, pastor, show permission given to sell church property and reinvest in other property for a new building.

In late 1910, Bishop W. A. Candler presided over the ceremonies of the laying of the cornerstone. While a student at Emory College, in Oxford, Georgia, Bishop Candler preached his first sermon in the church at Lithonia.

There hung over the congregation a large indebtedness until 1923 when W. T. Briggs, the pastor, with the assistance of a persevering membership, lifted this debt and C. C. Jarroll, in December, 1923, preached the dedicatory sermon. The cost of the building was $22,000.00.

In 1949, a campaign was launched and $10,000 was secured for improvements and beautification of the church and parsonage. A pipe organ had been installed in the church several years previous. The church sanctuary, now with its cathedral lights and windows, all in memory and in honor of loyal members, is really a "thing of beauty and joy forever."

The present value of the church is $75,000.00.

The parsonage on a lot adjoining the church is a comfortable, modern home, valued at $10,000.00.

There has been a woman's organization since the early '80's. The present Woman's Society of Christian
Service is very active, with every department functioning.

The church school and Methodist Youth Fellowship are well organized and are very active and enthusiastic.

The church membership is 330 and the budget for this year, 1952-1953, is $12,000.00.

Mrs. C. J. Tucker, Historian

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