"Out of the Past, Into The Present, Challenging The Future"

1867 † 2000

"133 Years in Service to God and Humanity"

Metropolitan
United Methodist Church

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133rd Church Anniversary

Sunday, October 29, 2000
11:00 A.M.

Rev. King A. Harris, Pastor
Mr. James F. Reynolds, Lay Leader
On April 23, 1968, a new denomination was created when The Evangelical United Brethren Church, and The Methodist Church joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas. The new denomination was given birth by two churches that had distinguishing histories and influential ministries in various parts of the World. The new denomination was named The United Methodist Church.
Metropolitan United Methodist Church was established in October 1867. The property was purchased from Addison Maupin of Bedford County, Virginia, for the sum of sixteen hundred dollars.

Many committed and devoted men and women have played a part in the history of Metropolitan. The same spirit that characterized the early leaders is in evidence today, in the current leaders. They bear the responsibility of the Church in promoting Christian Witness and service in this community.

On November 30, 1909, The Rome Tribune-Herald carried a front-page story indicating that the pastor of Metropolitan, Edward D. Petty, and the Trustees had an injunction suit brought against them to restrain them from completing a new brick structure.

Some of the White neighbors tried to purchase the Church property in an effort to remove the Church from its present location. The Trustees refused to sell. The neighbors registered a complaint that the Church was a nuisance to the neighborhood, with “loud preaching, singing, shouting, and crying out.”

The case was argued before Judge Moses Wright, after several postponements. “In rendering his decision, Judge Wright refused to enjoin the building process...but did prohibit any meeting or ringing of the bell, before the hour of 8:00 A.M.”
Today, one might ask, "Why were there several postponements?" Could it be that the judge was reluctant to hear a case to STOP the building of a Church? Even a Church for Blacks? Could it be that a judge named "Moses" was a Christian and tried to avoid dealing with the situation? Or perhaps he felt the matter was of a frivolous nature. Neither the newspaper account nor court records delved into these matters. We do not know what influenced the judge's thinking and actions; nor why the case was postponed. We can only surmise that he had a great deal of pressure placed upon him.

We thank God that there were level-headed men of both races at that time, or the story might have had a different ending. So Judge Wright ruled in favor of the Trustees, and they were able to continue the construction of the brick Church, completing it in 1910.

The Trustees who were taken to court were Taylor E. R. Person, R. M. Miller, Robert Ware, C. D. Dodson T. F. Snow. These men and members of the congregation had to labor long and hard; yet with blood, sweat, tears and prayer, they persevered until their goal was achieved. They were not quitters! They were winners! One writer has said, "A winner never quits, and a quitter never wins."

These early Christians in Metropolitan had very little formal education, yet they had a vision of a beautiful, magnificent brick building, and they were willing to sacrifice and accept the enormous risk involved with borrowing $2,700 to build this Church, at 8% per annum, and to repay the loan in four years.

No doubt these Trustees, being unlearned men, did not understand the legal document they were signing, nor the consequences of their becoming default in the payment of the note, the insurance premium, and the taxes. But we strongly feel that they knew God and they believed that with God on their side, "All things are possible!"

So they stepped out on faith, knowing it was going to be tough, knowing they faced a big challenge, knowing there was no room for failure, but determined to move forward and build a Church, not only for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren, and for generations yet unborn.
They surely must have realized, even with their limited education, that there is no such thing as a "Free Lunch," or of "Getting something for nothing." They were willing to pay the price, to sign a legal document with almost insurmountable encumbrances.

So we can understand why they sometimes met at the Church, in the early morning hours, before going on their jobs, to pray and ask God to show them the way to earn enough money to be able to pay the mortgage note when due, and to be able to pay the taxes that were assessed. In those early morning, prayer meetings, we can imagine that they each drew strength from one another as they savored a brief moment for fellowship in the presence of Almighty God.

As an integral part of the Anniversary Celebration each year, we have an impressive "Candle-Lighting Service" in memory of the Founding Trustees of 1867 and those of 1910, the year the brick edifice was completed. It is altogether fitting and proper to pause and look back to see "From whence we came!" John Sherman said, "The best prophet of the future is the past." While Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

**Metropolitan United Methodist Church** has been blessed with many outstanding, dynamic leaders in her 133 years of service. The roster includes thirty-four fine ministers, each with his own style and area of expertise. Time does not permit us to relate the achievements of all these pastors. We shall simply point out some of the accomplishments of a few of the most recent ones.

Dr. J. N. Shropshire came in 1968, after having served on the Conference Board of Education. He brought a wealth of information concerning the organizational structure of the "New" Church. He conducted seminars on the local level and sent officers to Conference sponsored seminars so they could learn their duties.

He organized the Church into the various commissions and they began to function effectively, under his guidance and leadership. He improved the financial reporting and record system at the Church. He began having the Treasurer's Report mailed to the membership monthly.

Shropshire initiated Food Workshops at the Atlanta Gas Light Company, to help ALL low-income families in the community learn how to use commodity foods.
He organized two choirs and robes were secured and paid for by the choirs during Dr. Shropshire's brief tenure, of one-and-a-half-years. Yet his influence is still felt today.

In 1971, Calvin Lawton came to Metropolitan. He led the membership in purchasing a Church Bus and starting a Sunday School Breakfast Program. This program is still being used.

Joseph Crawford was appointed to Metropolitan in 1978. He initiated the Children's Message in the worship service. He organized a Gospel Choir and started many sport activities with other Churches. He was very active in the community, and was invited into the high schools to conduct a series of lectures on "Marriage and the Family" each year he was here.

Robert Williams came in 1982, and led the Church in purchasing a new parsonage, in a residential area, away from the busy, commercially zoned East First Street. The 1983 Graduating Class of East Rome High School held its Baccalaureate Service at Metropolitan (a first).

Robert Crawford came in 1984. Improvements were made to the Sanctuary, and to the Fellowship Hall where new flooring was installed, the walls paneled, ceiling lowered and new lighting installed. Under his leadership, a Food Pantry, a Summer Dynamics Camp and Tutorial Program were started, and each program continues to exist.

Harvey Palmer III, was appointed in 1993, and from the first day, he expressed his joy and excitement over having the opportunity to serve Metropolitan. He organized a thirty-five voice youth choir, recommended a young female candidate for the ministry; led a series of "Officers Training Retreats;" expanded the Tutorial Program to include three sites; improved the Summer Camp, and appointed a very capable Director for both Outreach Ministries.

In April 1966, he led the Church in purchasing new pews and wall-to-wall carpet for the sanctuary, new hymnals and Pew Bibles were purchased, and a library was added. The North Georgia Annual Conference met in Rome in May 1996, and Metropolitan was used for Holy Communion Services each morning. The new bishop, appointed July 1996, and three hundred Clergy Persons, came here for breakfast October 2, 1996. We felt especially blessed to have had Bishop Lindsey Davis with us.
Harvey was recognized recipient of "The Heart of the Community Award of Honor" in February 1996 and received the M.L. King, Jr., Humanitarian Award. He was very involved in Conference and District roles of the Church as well as serving the community. He chaired the Human Relations Commission, was Vice Chair of King Commission, Board Member of Rebecca Blaylock Early Learning Center, Board Member of Fellowship of Churches, and of United Way. He was their spokesman during the Funds Campaign.

King A. Harris was appointed to this Church in January 1998. He delivers powerful, spirit-filled sermons. He has good work ethics, and sets an example for all.

He is innovative and generous. He has high ideals and yet is very aware of many facets of this time and place. He has recommended a young man as a Candidate for the Ministry. His military background with ideas of getting things done, instantly, has created minor challenges.

King Harris initiated a "Warm Coat & Sweater Project" for needy children in the community. He has encouraged the Mission Coordinator to work with "Meals On Wheels" and has placed emphasis on Benevolences where all are encouraged to donate to this fund on a regular basis. Calls come in daily for help with rent, utilities, and prescription medication. We have helped in the past, but not to the extent that we are now. He encourages tithing to support the Church.

The pastor is very adept at the computer and creates very attractive worship bulletin covers, programs and flyers for special events. He is very generous and delights in giving gifts. He has provided gifts for all women of the Church on "Mother’s Day," Men on "Father’s Day," and guests on "Friends’ Day." He delivers a daily "Harris Commentary" on a local radio station.

King takes an active role in encouraging and providing good fellowship in such activities as hosting a “Cook Out" at the parsonage, and making homemade ice cream for the “Fall Festival”. He works along with the men in mopping and waxing floors to demonstrate his willingness to serve in any capacity.
He has served on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, Vice Chair of the Homeless Council, and is a member of the Board of Action Ministry, Rome Action Ministry, District Board of Ministry, District Committee on the Superintendency.

The influence of Metropolitan may be felt, not only in the religious life of Rome, but also in the social and civic life. For many years, the doors to this Church were open to meetings of school, fraternal and similar groups, due in part to the central location in the city, but more importantly because facilities were unavailable in Rome, to accommodate such groups due to segregated hotels and restaurants.

Metropolitan has sent forth ten of her dedicated sons and one daughter into the ministry. This brings great pride to the membership. As we look forward to the future of our Church, we are also mindful of the rich heritage of the past. We are called to re-dedicate ourselves to render greater service in this, the new millennium. We thank God for One Hundred Thirty-Three Years of service, and pray for God’s guidance and wisdom as we go forth with joy and confidence to meet the challenges of the future.

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