History of the Monticello Methodist Church

1951

Mary Dance--Historian
Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it ... That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, nor wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Eph. 5: 25-27.

For her my tears shall fall
For her my prayers ascend
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows
Her hymns of love and praise.
Monticello Methodist Church

The history of the Monticello Methodist Church dates back to the infant days of Methodism. The Virginians and Carolinians brought Methodism to Georgia when they began pouring into the up country after the American Revolution. In 1788 Bishop Francis Asbury, the Wandering Bishop, held the first conference in Georgia. About twelve years later the church in Monticello was organized. Practically all records for the first thirty years of its existence are missing. The actual date of organization cannot be ascertained, but it was during the first years of 1800, if not before.

On the 23rd of September, 1812 the lot upon which the church now stands was deeded by the Commissioners of the City of Monticello to the following trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church--Peter W. Gantier, Richard Holmes, Edward Brown, M. Andrews and Michael Durr. This transaction was made for the considerable sum of five dollars. It is probable that about this time the first Methodist Church was built, for in the church cemetery there is a grave of a stern hero of the War of 1812. The slab, gray with age, shows this inscription.

Sacred to the memory of General William Lee who departed this life on the 15th of March, 1815. Aged 38. Esteemed and honored by his country and universally beloved. His benevolence was unbounded and his virtues exemplary. He lived as he died, fearless of death and in joyful hope of immortal felicity.

Written records which have come down to us date back to 1836. At this time the church was a part of a circuit of ten churches as follows--Rock Spring, Hillsboro, New Hope, Elizabeth, Sardis, Liberty, Concord, Midway, Mt. Zion and Monticello. The circuit continued in this form, with few minor changes for over sixty years. Four of these churches, Monticello, Hillsboro, Liberty and New Hope are still active. There are no records of Rock Spring, Elizabeth, Midway, Mt. Zion or Concord. They, like old soldiers, seems to have faded away. Sardis church membership was moved to Monticello about 1910, and the building was sold to Mr. J. M. Oxford, who used the hand-hewn timbers in his barn, and in the foundation of his home.

The pastors who served these Churches and the years of their ministry are:
Alexander McAlphin 1836
Eli Bennet 1837-38
N. H. Harris 1839
John C. Carter 1840
G. I. Pearson 1841
J. E. Cook 1842
Hinton Crawford 1843-44
William Foster 1845
C. Trussel 1846
J. P. Turner 1847
E. W. Spear 1848
J. Blakely Smith 1849
Isaac Boring 1850
James Harris 1850
Sidney M. Smith 1851-52
Richard Lane 1853-54
W. A. Florence 1855-56
John B. McGhee 1857-58
Robt. W. Lovett 1859
Marshall F. Malsby 1860
Daniel Kelsey 1861-62
John E. Sentell 1863-64
W. W. Osln 1865-66
Daniel Kelsey 1867
W. W. Osln 1868
M. W. Arnold 1869
F. B. Davies 1870-71
E. G. Murrh 1872-73
W. W. Wadsworth 1874
Albert Gray 1875-76-77
J. A. Rosser 1878-79
Sam. P. Jones 1880
J. M. Bowden 1881-82
T. S. L. Harwell 1883
J. J. Morgan 1884
O. A. Thrower 1885-86-87-88
O. C. Simmons 1889-90-91-92
S. H. Dimon 1893-94

*Isaac Boring died on May 11th 1850 and James Harris was appointed to fill the unexpired term.
The Presiding Elders on the Monticello Circuit and their years of service were:

William Arnold  1836-1840
J. W. Tailey     1840-1844
Isaac Boring     1844-1848
J. W. Glynn      1848-1851
Josiah Sewis     1851-1852
S. Anthony      1852-1853
A. T. Mann       1853-1855
J. W. Glynn      1855-1859
J. E. Evans      1859-1862
Walter R. Brannan 1862-1866
J. C. Simmons    1866-1867
Walter R. Brannan 1867-1868
A. G. Hagood     1868-1870
W. N. Poulton    1871-1874
J. E. Evans      1874-1877
W. N. Cook       1877-1881
R. W. Bigham     1881-1882
J. N. Patillo     1882-1883
Gray            1883-1886
G. W. Yarbrough  1886-1890
R. J. Bigham     1890-1892
W. D. Anderson   1892-1894

The names Jeremiah Freeman and George F. Pierce appear in the Church records in 1831 and 1832, whether these men were visiting preachers or pastors is not known. The great Lorenzo Dow also preached on the circuit and the Daughters of the American Revolution have marked the spot where his meetings were held. The greatest revival of religion to come in Jasper County as told by the oldest citizens, resulted from a county-wide meeting with Sam. P. Jones doing the preaching. This meeting was not held during his pastorate but when he returned as a visiting minister. More than five-hundred were converted. The most outstanding event of the meeting was the conversion of Mr. and Mrs. John Webb and their son Frank. Mr. Webb owned a bar-room, which was his only source of income. On the day after his conversion, he entered the saloon and, with the help of neighbors, all liquors were emptied into the streets. People of the church took a collection and gave him money to start in a new business. Frank was sent to Emory to school, and though he did not return to Jasper, he became a worthy citizen of Georgia.

W. D. Anderson died February 1894 and W. A. Candler filled the unexpired term.
Prominent among the laymen of this period are the names of Thomas Broadus, W. A. Reid, Alf. Goolsby, Ben Purifoy, Major Key and Dr. Maddox.

In 1895 the Monticello Church appears in the records as a station, and has so continued until the present time. The old church building was torn down and the present building was erected at the cost of $3500. Plans for the building were drawn by Mr. John Davidson. In a pastoral report to the quarterly conference in December 1895 Rev. J. B. Allen says, "With a new, comfortable and commodious church in the cultural portion of town there is no reason why Methodism should not move rapidly upward." Officials in the new church were: J. L. Campbell, J. H. Kelly, J. C. Key, B. W. Purifoy, J. B. Webb, L. Benton.

In 1927, during the pastorate of J. L. Hall, Sunday School rooms were constructed at the estimated cost of $3500. While Mr. J. O. Brand was pastor, 1928-1931, the Mens Bible Class room was constructed in the basement and a piano installed. Several years later the sanctuary was made more beautiful by the addition of memorial windows. The front window is the only one that was placed when the church was built. This was done by the labors, and gifts of Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Campbell, who being childless, dedicated it to "Our Children" of the church.

In report to the last quarterly, the value of the church today was quoted as $25,000.

In Methodism, next in importance to the church, is a home for the pastor. The people of the new Monticello station lost no time in providing one. In July 1895 arbitrators, "to whom was referred the division of the parsonage property of the late Monticello Circuit," made the following report: We direct that the division be made in the proportion of 4 1/2 tenths to Hillsboro Circuit and 5 1/2 tenths to Monticello station, as just, fair and equitable division of same. This report was signed by R. T. Ross, L. D. Ezell and J. B. Webb.

On August 18th 1896, in quarterly conference, the "arbitrators of parsonage property were rejected" and J. H. Kelly and J. B. Webb were appointed to confer with two arbitrators from Hillsboro charge and they "selected an umpire for final adjustment."

In October 1896, the arbitrators reported a settlement of the parsonage property. It was decided that the Monticello station pay the Hillsboro Circuit "one hundred and fifty dollars with interest from the first Tuesday in September 1895, at seven per cent until paid for their interest in the parsonage."
The division of the property having been settled, a committee was appointed to take charge of parsonage property and build a new parsonage. On February the 14th 1897, this committee had completed its task and reported to the quarterly conference: There has come into our hands from all sources the following amounts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For sale of land to the County</td>
<td>$125.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sale of old parsonage kitchen</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sale of old parsonage and one acre</td>
<td>450.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the ladies</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From subscriptions</td>
<td>680.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1340.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which amount has been expended as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of new parsonage</td>
<td>1000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid to Circuit for their settlement in parsonage</td>
<td>125.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parsonage as awarded by arbitrators</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving old parsonage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing and other work</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The report was signed by J. H. Kelly, J. L. Campbell, Lucien Benton, W. R. Powell and W. B. Pourifoy. The first pastor to live in the new parsonage was H. L. Embry, and he said of his new home, "The people of Monticello gave us a royal reception—hot supper, warm fires and one of the very best as well as the prettiest parsonage in Georgia." Mr. Embry found on his pantry shelves lard, sugar, coffee, long sausage, short sausage, back bones and side bones.

The same parsonage, with repairs and some additions to keep it comfortable and modern, is used now. It was remodeled in 1950, when it became the home of Reverend James M. Moore and his family. Its present value, as given to the last quarterly Conference, is $7500.

We have no records of the Sunday school in the Monticello Church while it was a part of the Circuit, but the first station preacher, J. B. Allen says, "Our Sunday School is well organized. We have faithful and efficient teachers, and the children seem anxious to learn the story of the cross." No report was made of enrollment or finances. The first Superintendent mentioned was J. H. Kelly, and these serving in that official capacity since: R. A. Malone, J. S. Malone, J. Fred Benton, J. Ben Warren, G. G. Ezell, V. E. Thornton and Allen Britain. The present enrollment of the church school is 169 and the financial report for the year 1950-51 showed $198.00 expended for all purposes.

The first available report of Woman's organization in church was made to the Quarterly Conference July 14, 1894. Rev. S. H. Dimon was pastor of the church and Dr. W. A. Candler was presiding
elder. The organization was called the Monticello Auxillary of Woman's Missionary Society. There were 11 members. Mrs. G. M. Clements was President, Mrs. Dave Glover, Vice-President. Miss Emma Powell, Recording Secretary and Mrs. S. E. Swanson, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer. During the first year twenty-seven dollars and 15 cents was sent to the Conference Treasurer "as dues and for Special purposes." In 1895 the women were reporting under the name "Women's Foreign Missionary Society." At the time there were 20 members and Mrs. S. E. Swanson was President. During the pastorate of Rev. W. P. Irvine the name was again changed, and the Monticello women became a part of the Women's Society of Christian Service. At present there are 56 members and $1526.54 paid for all causes during the year 1950-51. This organization has been reported by every pastor as active and doing good work.

The Epworth League of the Methodist Church South of Monticello, Georgia was first organized in February, 1893. It was reorganized April 18, 1894, "with a roll of officers and a few members. Three standing committees were appointed. Two meetings have been held, the last one being well attended, and some new members were added. The regular weekly prayer meeting of the league is held on Sunday Morning."

Since this first report on the organization, records show many pastors reporting no League and stressing the need for one. On the other hand, many pastors report good work.

The League was changed to the Methodist Youth Fellowship in 1940. This change came during the pastorate of Mr. W. T. Irvine, and reports of good work have been continuous since that time. At present the M. Y. F. has about 25 members.

The Monticello Methodist Church has sent out no preacher, missionary nor deaconess. However, no record of its contribution or full-time workers would be complete without the mention of Mr. J. T. Benton, known to all who loved him as "Uncle Jimmie." By his consecrated life and sacrificial living, Uncle Jimmie made it possible for many youth to get training for lives of service. He did this, first, by making large contributions to schools where these youth were educated, Emory University, Asbury, Reinhardt and Young Harris Colleges were recipients of generous donations. Then, many individual boys and girls were helped—perhaps more than any of us know about. Some became ministers in our homeland, and others served in foreign fields. Thus, a man who spent most of the 101 years of his life within the bounds of Jasper County, yielded an influence felt around the world. The church celebrated Uncle Jimmie's 100th birthday the first Sunday in July, 1950. People, throughout the state, came to pay tribute to him.
Although this church cannot claim to have sent Miss Virginia Hayes into missionary and religious education service, it is her church home when she is in Monticello during vacations. Jasper County is her home, and we are proud of the service she has rendered as a missionary in South America and the Philippines. Miss Hayes is now a teacher in Asbury College.

There are hundreds of others, who have gone out to take their places in fields of business, education and various professions. They have also taken their places in the churches where they live, and are an active part of the vast multitude who seek Him together.

The financial report made to the quarterly Conference in October, 1895 was the first made by the church after it became a station charge. It reads as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
<th>Paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Elder</td>
<td>$ 77</td>
<td>$ 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preacher in charge</td>
<td>$ 633</td>
<td>$ 582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishops</td>
<td>$ 15</td>
<td>$ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Claimants</td>
<td>$ 89</td>
<td>$ 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Missions</td>
<td>$ 90</td>
<td>$ 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Missions</td>
<td>$ 48</td>
<td>$ 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Extension</td>
<td>$ 29</td>
<td>$ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>$ 22</td>
<td>$ 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Bible Society</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womans F. M. Society</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total raised from all sources</td>
<td></td>
<td>1051.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequent reports through the year usually read "paid in full." The total amount raised during the year ending June, 1951 was $8527--will reach 9,000.

Pastors who have served the Monticello church since 1895 are:

- J. B. Allen 1895
- J. N. Snow 1896
- H. L. Embry 1897
- T. C. Betterton 1898
- W. D. Dillard 1899-1900
- A. S. Harris 1901-1902
- J. W. Stipe 1903-1904-1905
- John P. Erwin 1906-1907-1908
- R. W. Dixon 1909-1910
- J. C. Atkinson 1911-1912
- R. B. England 1913-1914-1915
- William R. Mackay 1916-1917
- Felton Williams 1918
- Agustus Ernest 1919-1924
Presiding Elders serving during this period are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. S. Bryan</td>
<td>1898-1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. R. Foote</td>
<td>1900-1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. W. Heidt</td>
<td>1906-1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. E. Dowman</td>
<td>1908-1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. W. Quillian</td>
<td>1910-1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. F. Fraser</td>
<td>1914-1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. B. Mayes</td>
<td>1918-1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. T. Crawley</td>
<td>1923-1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. F. Dempsey</td>
<td>1926-1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nath Thompson</td>
<td>1929-1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. E. Tyler</td>
<td>1932-1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace Rogers</td>
<td>1933-1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. M. Sullivan</td>
<td>1937-1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. H. Jones</td>
<td>1941-1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. L. Middlebrooks</td>
<td>1945-1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. G. Mackay</td>
<td>1950-1951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the gospel messages brought to the congregation by these men, our people have had the opportunity of hearing outstanding men of the church who, from time to time, have been invited to fill the pulpit. Among these have been: Bishop Warren A. Candler, Bishop W. N. Ainsworth, Gypsie Smith Jr., Horace Sprague and Bishop Arthur J. Moore.

Hundreds, through the years, have found a more abundant life in Christ through the channels of this church. Many have given time, talent and money to the kingdom's cause. We are thankful to all the people who through the years have been loyal; who loved the church and gave themselves for it. If we catch the torch they have thrown to us, and go forward singing from our hearts,

We love thy church, O God,
The House of Thine abode
The Church our Blessed Redeemer Saved
By His own precious blood,

we can leave to those who come after us a glorious history.
Bibliography

1. Church Register. Monticello Methodist Church.


