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HISTORY  
of  
NEW HOPE METHODIST CHURCH

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEW HOPE METHODIST CHURCH

More than a hundred years ago, in the days when our forefathers traveled by horse and buggy, and read their Bibles by candlelight, New Hope Church had its beginning. At first, she was a little log structure known as Brush Arbor, and served the community as both church and schoolhouse. No doubt, some of our great grandparents knelt in that humble little building during the terrible Battle of Atlanta when the city was aflame, and prayed that God would send peace once more to their land.

New Hope is rich in history and tradition, having served a growing community for over a hundred years. By word of mouth we know she existed in the 1850's, and by way of record we know she was a church in the 1870's when two acres of land were given to the church by Clara and Henry Sanders.

One of the first pastors of New Hope was Dr. Tom Key, father of James L. Key, a former mayor of Atlanta. Oscar Key, brother of Mayor Key, taught school at New Hope, and also substituted as preacher many times. Some of the older members of this church were pupils of Oscar Key.

Other early preachers were Rev. Conway and Rev. Costley. Mr. J. B. Harrison served as Sunday School superintendent and assistant pastor while preparing for full time ministry, but he died in young manhood. Members of his family are active in the church today.

In the early 1900's, Rev. Salter who still lives in the community, served the church as its pastor, and Rev. Dunson, grandfather of one of the present members of New Hope, also served about the same time.

Another beloved preacher of this same era was Rev. Dodson, familiarly known as "Uncle Doc". He was a circuit rider, serving New Hope, South Bend, Jones Chapel, and Marvin Churches.

For a period of time there were no regular preaching services at New Hope, the church being used only for Sunday School and singings. Then, two spiritual-minded people, Mrs. Leila Fountain, and Rev. Campbell held a revival and reorganized the church. The first pastor after the church <sup>was</sup> re-established was Rev. Cowan, whom everyone called "Daddy" Cowan.

"Daddy" Cowan's son, Rev. Emory Cowan, succeeded him as pastor, and Rev. Edgar and Rev. House followed in succession. These men were at New Hope during the 1920's, and laid the way for the more recent pastors in firmly establishing the church.

Rev. S. F. Dowis, the pastor who was with New Hope the longest period of time, served the church conscientiously for seven years during the 1930's. It was during his eventful ministry that the new church edifice was built, and the little oil lamps around the wall gave way to electricity. The new stone structure was built around the old white frame church, and services were continued while the work was in progress. So much was Brother Dowis' heart with New Hope that often he would give his salary back to the church to be used in the building program. This beautiful little sanctuary that we enjoy today was a dream that one faithful man saw fulfilled.

It was during Rev. Dowis' ministry also that the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestant Churches, North and South, merged, becoming one church, and New Hope ceased to be Methodist Protestant.

Following Rev. Dowis' ministry as pastor, Rev. F. C. Hicks came to us. He was a truly consecrated man, and he and his family added much to the spiritual life of the church.

Rev. Jesse Booth, brother of one of our active members, was successor to Rev. Hicks and the church membership was greatly increased during his ministry.

The first Emory student to serve at New Hope as a supply pastor was W. B. Conn. Rev. Conn was deeply interested in youth, and sought to organize and keep them interested in church work. He firmly believed that the youth of today is the Hope of Tomorrow.

Succeeding Rev. Conn were Rev. Howren Norton, Rev. Charles Beaman, and Rev. Bob Weaver, all student pastors. Rev. Norton and Rev. Weaver are now in the Florida conference, and Rev. Beaman is serving in the North Carolina conference. These men all made contributions to our church, even though they spent only a year each with us. They, like Rev. Conn, were all vitally interested in the youth of the church.

After Rev. Weaver, we were honored to have as pastor our beloved Bro. W. J. DeBardeleben who has just recently gone home to Heaven. The church grew in number and spirit under his leadership, and our hearts were heavy on giving him up in 1947. We remember Bro. DeBardeleben for preaching a simple, practical, and workable Christianity, and for saying he would consider his work repaid if the Lord gave him one preacher and one missionary from New Hope. He would rejoice to know that his prayers have been more than answered.

Rev. Boyd Winn, an enthusiastic young preacher succeeded Bro. DeBardeleben. He only served one year as pastor, but the people grew to love him deeply, and were loathe to give him up to the North Carolina Conference. We know our loss was their gain, and that the difficult project that was given him on his new assignment has been well accomplished by now.

Rev. W. E. Brown was appointed to New Hope after Bro. Winn, and served the church faithfully for the next two years. He was a great favorite with the young people, and besides preaching, he successfully taught a large class of boys in Sunday School. His wife, known to everyone as Dottie, was responsible for organizing a junior and adult choir, and also worked with different church groups, especially with the Woman's Society of Christian Service. We were very proud when Rev. Brown went from our church as a Special Student to Edinburgh, Scotland, and hope to have the honor of hearing him preach from our pulpit again someday.

In the Spring of 1950 Rev. Nicholas G. Mas preached a very successful revival for Bro. Brown, and the church members were so impressed with this young man that they requested him as their next pastor. He and his talented wife were with us for only a short time, but much good was accomplished during that year. It was for Rev. Mas and his family that we purchased our first parsonage, a little white, frame cottage not far from the church on Constitution Road.

In the Spring of 1951, Brother Mas left New Hope to go to New York, and the conference sent us Rev. George Harper who was completing his studies at Emory. He practically did the work of a full-time pastor, preaching, visiting, and helping the other men in whatever project happened to be under way at the church. He was greatly responsible for our new, large parking lot in the rear of the church building. Brother Harper finished his studies at Emory, and in the Spring of 1952 went back to the Florida conference where he is continuing his good work.

In June, 1952, many of us saw an old dream fulfilled - our first full-time pastor was sent to us in the person of Rev. W. D. Spence. We consider ourselves very fortunate in having him as our minister, for he not only is a wonderful preacher, but also a wise counselor, and friend. He and his family, in the short while they have been with us, have already added much to the spiritual life of New Hope, and we hope to have them with us for a long time to come.

No church history would be complete without mention of its faithful women's groups. We remember the Woman's Missionary Society and how it was responsible for raising most of the money that went into the new church building as it stands today. Our newly organized Woman's Society of Christian Service, now in its fourth year, has accomplished much under the leadership of three very capable presidents. Besides contributing to foreign missions, and many other worthy causes, the W. S. C. S. has raised the money for our four new Sunday School rooms, and hopes to do even greater things for the church and community in the years to come. These are women with vision.

After telling a little about the women's work in the church, we would also like to mention our good men who also have loved and labored for our church. New Hope has been fortunate in having laymen who have served the church faithfully and loyally in many capacities - Sunday School superintendents, stewards, trustees - and they, too, deserve praise and credit for their contributions.

New Hope has had many faithful pastors and laymen, but none have been more faithful and dependable than the man who has served in the capacity of assistant pastor for the past several years, Rev. M. E. Long. He has been a great help to our last several pastors - helping with communion services, funerals, baptisms or leading the singing. He has preached for us many times, and much good has been accomplished through him. He is one of those, who when called upon to do a task, answers readily, "Here am I".

We are proud of our first parsonage, a neat little white frame cottage located on Constitution Road. The church members have worked hard to make it a place of beauty. The church office which is in the parsonage is open at all times to those who need counsel, or who wish to confer with the pastor in any way.

We would like to include in this history of our church all the many things of interest that have occurred during the years - the things that have made us weep, laugh, and rejoice - but this is impossible in so limited a space. However, we would like to recall the wonderful times we have had at the Mills' District Singing Conventions which were held annually for a number of years at Clifton Methodist Church. New Hope, known as a "Singing church", many times won banners for the best singing at the conventions. Once, at least, New Hope walked away with all the honors, having won the Infant, Beginners, Intermediates, and Adult Banners. How proud we were that day! And today, many years hence, we are still a singing church. Our belief is that a church

that loves to sing, will always have a song in its heart!

Yes, from Brush Arbor to New Hope Methodist Church is a long, long way, but through the years there have always been people with vision, people forgetful of self, who worked and labored that theirs might be a strong, spiritual church. Like the Hebrew fathers who were long in reaching the land of Canaan, many New Hope forefathers died before arriving at their goal, but they had the promise which is ours to carry on. As one of our former pastors said in his last sermon at New Hope Church, "Keep the Flame on the Altar Aglow", so it is ours to do, ours to see that New Hope Church grows, and grows that the future may be made brighter for many people, and that many shall be filled with New Hope.