HISTORY OF NEW HOPE METHODIST CHURCH

New Hope Methodist Church was founded in 1956, but written records were not available until 1894. The one exception is an account recorded in the Marietta Circuit Quarterly Meeting minutes in 1883 of a meeting held at Wesley Chapel and attended by H.N. Whitfield who represented New Hope. In the beginning services were held in a school building located on the Roswell Road about a quarter of a mile from where the Drive-in Theater now stands. Later it was moved to Powers Ferry Road about 1/2 mile from Roswell Road. This first church was known as old Hopewell and was a union Sunday School with all denominations attending. Hopewell was burned during the Civil War.

There is no record of the exact date that the church was moved to its present location, but after the war Isaac Sewell donated the property on which the church was built. The timber was given by Isaac Sewell, W.M. Frey and Hemp Wylie. These men were leaders in the erection of this church located south of the present building. The name was changed to New Hope and the church became a Methodist Church. Later Mr. W.M. Frey added to the church property with the donation of the lot adjoining Wylie Road. The old building was just a common frame, weather-boarded structure, unceil ed and unpainted for years after it was built. It had a double door in one end and one door on each side. The double door entered a center aisle that led up to the altar. There was a cross aisle in front of the altar to the two side doors. The two spaces to the left and right of the pulpit were reserved for the elderly people. The men and boys sat on the left side of the church and the ladies and girls sat on the right. If a young couple came to church together, they separated at the door, he going to the left, she to the right. The church was furnished with long homemade benches which extended from the center aisle to the side of the building. This building was used not only for church services but as a general community building—church, Sunday School, common school, singing schools, debating society and gatherings in general. New Hope was one of eight churches on the Marietta Circuit. Pioneer families of the community were the Freys, Sewells, Wylies, Thomases, Ferrys, Spinks, Rogers, Garwoods, Benedicts, Hambys, Moores, and a few others. Almost everyone was Methodist.

The church had functioned continuously through the years. The present building was erected in 1895. In the early days Sunday School was held on Sunday afternoon and worship services only once a month. Mr. B.T. Frey—who was Sunday School Supt. for 27 years—used to go to First Methodist Church of Marietta for Sunday morning services and to New Hope for afternoon Sunday School. Mrs. Frey who taught a Sunday School class at New Hope for over fifty years, always accompanied her husband and since his death has continued to be one of the church's most active members.
Charles J. Thomas succeeded Mr. Frey as S.S. Supt. and remained in that position for 26 years—retiring in 1955. Lewis Fowler is the present Supt. For the last fifteen years the ministers of the church have been students in the Theology School of Emory University, and the pastors have come from Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, Alabama, and Georgia. The church is very proud of the fact that two of its members have gone out from the church to enter full time Christian Service. Elmo Tabb went as a missionary to Africa. Bond Fleming entered the field of ministry and at the present time is the Head of the Department of Philosophy at Millsap College in Jackson, Miss.; having received his doctor's degree from Boston University.

In the 1920's five classrooms were added to the back of the present building. In 1945 extensive remodeling was completed. This included the enlargement of the church auditorium, new ceiling, new paint inside and out, new roof, and the construction of six Sunday School classrooms from the original five rooms. In 1950 a steeple and bell, a new front vestibule, ambered colored glass windows, and velvet drapes were added. A central gas heating system was installed and extensive improvements were made to the grounds to beautify the property. These improvements made a very modern, attractive church.

A three room building, at one time the New Hope School, now belongs to the church and is used by the church and the community.

In January 1953, under the leadership of Rev. Sanford McDonald, the church voted to have a full time program and to employ an assistant minister on a trial basis. Rev. F.H. Price, a student of Theology at Emory, was the first minister to serve in this capacity. In May 1954 the church voted to withdraw from the circuit and become a station church. Rev. J.G. Greening was the first minister to serve the church full time. In January 1955, the church purchased a lot on New Hope Road adjoining the church property and laid the foundation for a parsonage. In August 1955 a five room brick veneer parsonage was completed and furnished. Rev. and Mrs. Emory Brackman were the first family to occupy the new parsonage. The final note on the parsonage was paid on April 9, 1956 and it will be dedicated at 2:30 p.m. on May 20, 1956.

Church activities, in addition to the two worship services on Sunday include Sunday School at 10 A.M., Junior and Senior Youth Fellowships at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, Woman's Society of Christian Service, Methodist Men's Club, Adult Choir and Youth Choir. The Adult Choir, directed by Mrs. Floy Von Hofe Smith participates in the morning worship service and the Youth Choir, directed by Mrs. Marlene Myers, participates in the evening worship service.

At the present time there are 110 members and 9 preparatory members on the church roll. Of this number 54 members and 8 preparatory members have been added in the last five years.