NORTH COVINGTON
UNITED
METHODIST
CHURCH

HISTORY
1876 - 1981

HOME COMING
7 June 1981
MIDWAY - NORTH COVINGTON

Mamie Ozburn Odum

Serene in God's power, this loved church
Has eased the knocks and blows of men,
Given words of cheer to the broken hearted,
Lifted sorrows and eased sin.

Gallantly the red-brick walls welcome
Sons and daughters home again,
The multicolored windows muting
Loved old prayers and songs refrain.

Up from the misty past are looming
Those who have marched adown these aisles--
The so-called dead memories linger
Recalling past days, joys and smiles.

But today--it stands in silence grand,
Today it welcomes you home again,
Today we lift our hearts to Him
Today we sing God's sweet refrain.

(Written for the first Homecoming in 1945)

HOMECOMING AT NORTH COVINGTON

Mamie Ozborn Odum

Lord, let Thy work go strongly, sweetly onward,
All those that gather, make their coming sweet.
Lift high Thy hands, disperse to all a blessing,
Hallow this ground--to wayward, weary feet.

Let all that gather here, learn of Thy blessing
'Tis Thy abode and not the house of man.
Bless all that come Thy blessed word dividing,
Knowing it is Thy way, part of the Holy plan.

As homeward hearts surround Thy sacred altar
Marked by no jealousies, no hate, no strife,
Hallow this house and help us keep it Holy,
For better and more sacred things of life.

Bless all that come, go with them down life's journey,
Fill hungry hearts, let fear and doubting cease.
And as we sing the loved old songs of Zion
Let us know in truth, this is a place of peace.

(Written for the 1962 Homecoming)
North Covington United Methodist Church

1876- HISTORY -1981

by

Miss Eva A. Mask

PREFACE

Bishop William Cannon once said, "It's a sad age which loses all its memory." Others have said that we cannot know who we are, if we forget who we have been. There is direction for our present and our future in our past.

Believing these facts, I spent months in careful research and wrote the first history of the North Covington Church in 1945, and it was read as part of the program for the first Homecoming Day. Later, in 1951, I updated the history and it was printed in booklet form, and distributed at Homecoming that year. In 1962, it was updated again by Mrs. Jack Gibbs Sr. (Belle), and reprinted for the 1962 Homecoming.

Using these past histories of the church, and other research materials, I rewrote a brief history of our church from 1889 to 1976, and it was read at Homecoming in 1976.

This year, 1981, I have again updated the history to include the last four years, and have added to other periods in the story for the records.

I am typing the history of the North Covington United Methodist Church, and copies will be made by Harold Cobb, who also makes the copies of the North Covington News Chronicle (The Church newsletter), and the weekly church bulletins.

Eva A. Mask

June, 1981

(On the occasion of the thirty-seventh Homecoming at N C U M C).

History of North Covington United Methodist Church

A great deal of our thinking, deciding, and doing is informed by what those who have gone before us have thought, decided, and done. Since we believe we can better decide where we should go, when we know where we have been, it is appropriate that North Covington Christians make a study of the past, especially the history of the North Covington United Methodist Church, first known as Midway Church.

It is evident in the researched material that a nucleus of the North Covington Church existed as early as 1876, making the church actually one hundred years old, when the bicentennial of our country was being celebrated. However, the present building was not erected until 1889.

There is every indication that the Midway Sunday School prospered even before the present buildings were erected. There was a goodly number attending regularly down near the Georgia Railroad, in a dwelling house designated as Midway Chapel, and later known as the Darwin Home, and then as the Firley Robinson Home on Herring Street. Services were also held in the Charlie Powell Home (known to many as Dr. Ben Yancey's home and now as the Avery Home). The third place where services had been held was in a store room at the Granger home at the top of River's Hill. The home was moved when the bridge at the underpass was built. The first benches were crude planks laid across logs, in contrast to the upholstered seats in the NCUMC sanctuary in 1981.

These wooden buildings did not prove satisfactory. Mrs. A. D. Echols, a member of the church and a devout Christian, donated the ground on which the church stands, and began the building of the main part of the little brick church. It was completed almost a century ago, in 1889. Mr. Jack Carroll, an early member made the bricks for the construction, and fired them at his own kiln. His kiln was located on Yellow River near Porterdale. He later continued to make bricks to be used at North Covington, in the yard of his little wooden house in the field a few yards Northeast of the church.
Hot air for heating was blown into the church from a coal furnace in the basement. Years later, the furnace failed to work and pot-bellied stoves were installed. For many years, Mr. A. L. Huckaby kept the fires going during the services, so that everyone stayed comfortable. The back seats in the sanctuary were not very popular, however. This little brick church was outstanding from the beginning, with its multi-colored windows that seemed to soften the prayers and songs that were lifted.

After the church was built, the Sunday School grew so rapidly that more room was needed. In 1905, the first Sunday School annex was built -- adding the two rooms back of the sanctuary. The plan was to sell bricks to pay for the work, and one of the Baptist ladies of the community, the late Miss May Livingston, got the prize for selling the most bricks.

Mr. Kelly, the father of Mrs. Earl Smith, was the first Superintendent of the Sunday School, and served long and faithfully. Some of the church's records that were the first to be preserved, were written in his beautiful Spencerian hand.

Mr. W. P. Odum, fondly called "Grandpa Odum" by the children and adults alike, was among the early superintendents. His influence has reached far into the making of worthy men and women in the community. In the early 1930's, your historian remembers his feeble voice, every Sunday morning, saying,"Little children, Jesus loves you."

Mrs. Echols and her daughters, Mrs. Sallie(W.C.) Clarke and Mrs. Adel Turner, helped the Sunday School to grow and prosper. Mrs. Clarke always trained a children's choir to sing a Cappella each Sunday.

In these early days, the church was a joint charge with Oxford, and was called Midway. Many Emory College Theological students received training in the little church before the University was moved to Emory, Georgia, Atlanta.

Among these earlier ministers who served the church were:

The Reverends Mac Eakes, Will Budd, Nath Thompson, Ryborn, Yarbrough, Dickey, Melton, Dillard, Shaw, W.H. Laprade, Henry Jones, J.A. Sharpé, Lundy Harris, Wynn Joyner, and Dr. Quillian.

Corra Harris, wife of Lundy Harris, wrote the "Circuit Rider" about her husband's experiences in the small churches of North Georgia. The North Covington Church Library (The Ophelia Mayo Mask Memorial Media Center) would like a copy of the book, if one can be obtained, since the Reverend Harris served North Covington Church in its early days.

In the 1920's, Mrs. Sallie Clarke set up a movement, with the backing of the Men's Community Club, which functioned within the church, to secure the official conference approval for a new name. Emory University had been moved to Atlanta, and Midway Church, Oxford Charge, was no more, but became known as the North Covington Methodist Church.

Various opinions that brought some dissension caused the removal of many of the leaders to First Methodist Church, Covington. Those faithful ones who were left behind, and believed in God's care for the North Covington Church, were unable to support it adequately. Therefore recognition of the independent church was not accorded. For several years, the North Covington Sunday School kept the little church open and active.

Mr. Lockhart, director and teacher in Covington's Business School, was the volunteer Superintendent of the Church School during this crisis period. Then, pastors from First Methodist Church, Covington, and Oxford came in the afternoons for services, strictly voluntary and missionary. Sunday School was held every Sunday afternoon with an attendance from seventy-five to one hundred, and church was held one Sunday each month. Some of the Sunday School Superintendents besides Kelly, Odum, and Lockhart (who were mentioned) were Earl Smith, R. P. Lester, Briscoe, Mrs. Mamie Odum, John Dunham, and Wendell Johnson. Mr. T. A. McCrary was assistant Superintendent for a long time and served well. Later superintendents were: Miss Eva Mask, Jack(H.A.) Gibbs, Billy House, and Richard Allen. Mrs. Elwyn Newman was superintendent from 1978 - '80, and Mrs. Kathy (Richard) Allen became superintendent in 1981. Jack Standard was assistant to Richard Allen and also led the singing. Much space is being given to the early days of the Church School, because it was the life of the church. North Covington has often been called "The Sunday School Church."

Finally, the annual North Georgia Methodist Conference added the church to the Brick Store Circuit. Since then, it was changed to the North Covington Charge, and now, 1981, it is an independent church with a full-time pastor, either student or retired (usually). Pastors during some of these early days of struggle were: Lester Rumble, Jimmy Randle, Pryor(Peter) Manning, Carroll, Elizer, Haynes, Maxwell, Stone, Emory, Petty, Van Landingham, Jack Nichols, and Clifton Freeman.
Mr. Clifton Freeman was the pastor who suggested that the Homecoming become an annual affair on Father's Day. He preached the first Homecoming sermon in the church. This first Homecoming Day had been planned and prepared by Miss Eva Mask, Church School Superintendent at the time. She had complete cooperation from the pastor, her family, many efficient committees, and the whole congregation. This celebration was especially for honoring the fathers in 1945. Later, the official board changed the date to the first Sunday in June, which was believed to be a more convenient time. At this first Homecoming, the tables were made of loose planks that were borrowed from Campbell Lumber Company by Jack Gibbs Sr. The boards were laid on crude sawhorses and placed up and down the driveway at the side of the church. The "driveway" was a dirt pathway around the church. There was no parking lot!

The first Vacation Church School was held in 1946 with an enrollment of ninety and 95% attending every day. The schools were held for twenty-two years under the leadership of Miss Eva Mask. There were many experienced and faithful teachers before the end of that 22 years; some of them are still helping with the Bible Schools. In 1968, the Vacation Church Schools were discontinued, and again in 1976, under the leadership of Miss Eva Mask and with the support of the Reverend Harold Murphree and the District Superintendent, Dr. Garnett Wilder, Vacation Bible Schools were reopened.


In 1948, a new lot was bought, and the parsonage built. Mr. C. Freeman donated his services as carpenter and overseer of the building and worked long hours to see the building completed. A portion of the building was used for Church School classes, Youth and Prayer Meetings, and Vacation Church Schools for several years. Jimmy Jones was the first student pastor to live in the parsonage. He built much of the rock wall around the yard in the year 1950-51.

Leslie Rabb’s daughter, Rebecca Ann, born December 4, 1952, was the first child born to a preacher’s family living in the parsonage. The mortgage on the parsonage was paid off in 1954. Mrs. Ruth Hartsough Steele, daughter of C. Freeman, lent the money to the church, interest free. The monthly payments were carried directly to her by the treasurer, John L. Mask.

The last decades have brought many improvements in the facilities and programs of the church. The church property was extended to include a parking lot back of the church in 1950. This lot was graded, gravled, and security lights were added when Charles Poole was pastor (1960-62). The area was used in 1975-77 for a weekly Youth Recreation night under the supervision of the Church School Superintendent, Richard Allen.

A new Education and Sunday School Building was completed in 1956 with Alfred Hannah as pastor. The building was dedicated and officially opened in the fall of 1956 with Newton Scott as pastor. This building included Sunday School rooms, a fellowship room, kitchen, gas furnace and rest rooms. These were the first restrooms for NCUMC, and the first kitchen for the preparation of refreshments. No one would believe the stories that could be told about the "makeshifts" of previous years. The newest Church School annex, including four Sunday School rooms, was built, dedicated, and furnished while the Reverend Sid White was pastor in the late 1960's. In 1960, the mortgage on the Sunday School building was burned at Homecoming when Dewey Bentley was pastor. From 1960-62, with Charles Poole pastor, the church was repaired, and repainted outside, iron rails were added to the front steps, the church office was furnished with metal furniture, and new signs, lights, and gutters installed at the front.

On Mother’s Day, May 13, 1962, the adult Bible Classes were officially named the Eva Mask Bible Class and the Clifton Freeman Bible Class. This was done in recognition of the long and faithful services of Miss Eva Mask, and the late Mrs. Zed Steele, daughter of the late Reverend Clifton Freeman.

In later years, a new gas heating and cooling system has been installed, and the parsonage redecorated and furnished. New carpeting has been laid in the church, and also a speaker system installed, at the instigation of Jack Gibbs. A new organ was given to the church in 1974 by
Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Durden, and dedicated to the memory of their parents.

In November 1975, the first library for the church was officially opened to the membership, and dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Ophelia Mayo Mask, and to the service of God by the pastor, Harold Murphree. Many of the first books were donated from her own personal library, and those and all other donated books were processed and prepared for the shelves by Miss Eva Mask. The first librarian was Mrs. Eve Standard, and the very small library was open for use by the congregation and the community.

Ms. Marian Seaman has served as assistant to the married Mark Wells and joined the Baptist Church with her husband. In the fall of 1977, with Dr. Olin M. Ivey as pastor, the library was moved to the last two rooms in the Education Annex. It was expanded by the addition of many new books, and new furnishings given. A dedication was held in December 1977 with Dr. Olin Ivey leading the service. The library was officially named The Ophelia Mayo Mask Memorial Media Center. Gwen Weathers was elected editor, and the NCNC has continued monthly for four years.

At various times, the program of the church has been expanded and updated by: improved Women's Society Organizations, Laymen's programs, Leadership and Membership Training classes, Men's Club, Nurseries, Vacation School, Youth Fellowships, charge fellowship hours, Scout Troops, group singings, recording of church services for shut-ins, basketball teams, weekday work and visitation nights ( '74, '75, '76 ), worship service planning nights (1977-78), summer recreation nights, Book and Craft Clubs, Story Hours in the church library, Art and Craft Clubs, prayer groups, family nights, fellowship suppers, and clean-up schedules.

Under Dr. Olin Ivey's leadership (1977-Feb. '78), the Work Areas of the church were activated after lying dormant for some time. In an effort to make worship more meaningful, he met with all who would come weekly to plan the worship services. Acolytes began and ended the church services each Sunday, and heightened the interest of the children and youth. In 1977, tapers for the acolytes to use were given by Miss Eva Mask in honor of the children, and they were dedicated in December 1977. Advent was observed at morning worship services for the first time in 1977. Various family groups led the services which were coordinated by Mrs. James Corry; she also prepared the Advent wreath. Monthly worship services were planned for the Bolingreen Nursing Home. Miss Eva Mask led the services, Mrs. Mary Bates was pianist, Ann Corry scheduled the services and led the singing. All people from the church or community were invited to participate. Many residents of the home and various singing groups attended. The Children's Choir from the church sang many times. A room was decorated and furnished for the Church Nursery. Eve Standard was the artist who painted the scenes on the wall.

Kathy Allen followed Eva Standard as librarian for a short time. In 1977, Miss Eva Mask became the official librarian. She held a children's Story Hour each week in coordination with the MYF and Children's weekly meetings. In the fall of 1977, with Dr. Olin M. Ivey as pastor, the library was moved to the last two rooms in the Education Annex. It was expanded by the addition of many new books, and new furnishings given. A dedication was held in December 1977 with Dr. Olin Ivey leading the service. The library was officially named The Ophelia Mayo Mask Memorial Media Center. Gwen Weathers was elected editor, and the NCNC has continued monthly for four years. This newsletter printed for the whole community by the church remains the principal means of communication for the church.

Watchnight services were re-activated, with communion, on New Year's Eve (December 31, 1977). Dr. Ivey was in charge of the service. The first Chrismon tree was prepared in the church at Christmas 1977, with Dr. Ivey as pastor, and Eve Standard directing the making of the symbolic ornaments. Mrs. Charlie Standard first suggested the possibility of having a Chrismon tree. It was approved by the Administrative Council, and Mrs. Mamie Ozburn Odum was Newton County's poet Laureate for many years. After her death in 1975, a bulletin board containing copies of her poems was dedicated to her memory, and placed in the narthex of the church.

Mrs. Henry Odum Sr. and Mrs. John Mask Sr., the oldest members of the North Covington Church for several years, were both called home by their Heavenly Father in 1975.

Leadership and Membership Training classes, Men's Club, Nurseries, Vacation School, Youth Fellowships, charge fellowship hours, Scout Troops, group singings, recording of church services for shut-ins, basketball teams, weekday work and visitation nights ( '74, '75, '76 ), worship service planning nights (1977-78), summer recreation nights, Book and Craft Clubs, Story Hours in the church library, Art and Craft Clubs, prayer groups, family nights, fellowship suppers, and clean-up schedules.

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In 1977-78, a college and young working-age group was set up for the first time in many years at North Covington. The class did a tremendous job of leadership and work. This group was inspired and put into action through the work of the pastor, Olin Ivey, and the chairperson of the work area on Education, Eva Mask, and continued with the support of Dr. C. B. Cochran. The enthusiasm was picked up by the counselors, Jim and Karen Wiley. Ten enthusiastic members were soon recruited, and functioned at the Sunday School and Fellowship hour during the latter months of 1977 and 1978. They chose the name "The Olin Ivey Fellowship" and continued strong under Dr. C. B. Cochran's leadership, and with Allan Fields in the summer months. In the fall of 1978, they combined with the Young Adult Class and were totally consumed and existed no more. This has been a severe disappointment to the chairperson of the Education Work Area, for it has been the weak area in the N.C. Church School program for a long time.

In the very early days of the church, this age-group was the strength of the church, under the leadership of Mr. Earl Smith.

In the spring of 1976, Dr. C. B. Cochran, with his marvelous wisdom and understanding was able to lead the church in completing work that had been planned in sessions before his arrival as pastor. He led the group in outstanding revival services and followed through with Lenten services. The cane-bottomed chairs were repaired in 1978 under the supervision of Dr. Cochran, making plenty of seating arrangements for Church School and Fellowship hours. Dr. Cochran upheld the missionary program of the church. Under his supervision, Tom Wiley was able to help the church make a great showing with the Pension Crusade.

In 1976-77, Dr. Ivey and Dr. Cochran were able to do planning that was long range, with their eyes on the future as they worked in the present. The 1977-78 year, with experienced full-time leaders, stood out as a beacon light of hope.

In 1979, when Allan Fields was pastor, a much needed storage house at the parsonage was built. Monthly family-night suppers were enjoyed along with other forms of entertainment, with Mrs. Nancy Loyd as chairperson, and Allan Fields as pastor. A musical play, "Down By The Creek Bank" was presented by the children and young people of the church (all ages) with Mrs. Elwyn Newman and the pastor, Allan Fields, as directors. One of the special abilities of Allan Fields was seen in his work with the Council on Ministries. On August 9, 1978, with Allan Fields pastor, the Clifton Freeman Bible Class repaired and redecorated the two Sunday School rooms back of the sanctuary. The work had been completed on this date, and W. C. Bouchillon (Kid) accepted the bills and paid them. This left the class free to work on the project of building a much-needed storage house, which was placed on the parsonage lot. It is used for both the church and parsonage.

In 1979-80, with Frank Frye as pastor, the High School age group and the Middle School boys and girls have become very active. The leaders are Mrs. Evelyn Oglesby, Brian Allen, Alan McCrary, Richard and Kathy Allen. A choir has been organized with Brenda Pullin as director, Devona Frye, the pastor's wife, is pianist; Devona and Frank add much to the music for worship services.

In October, 1980, the pastor, Frank Frye, reported to the Official Board that the Pastor-Parish Committee met and recommended Richard Hunter and Danny Standard for candidacy and continued candidacy for the ministry. Richard is now attending school at Emory College, and Danny is preaching two Sundays each month as a pastor's aid.

In 1980 (Frank Frye pastor) the barbecue pit and shelter were built at the church. They were ready for use for the first time for the Fall Barbecue in 1980. Brian Allen has made a name for himself as "Head Chef" and leader of a crew of men who are good cooks when the church old-fashioned pit barbecues are given. In the year 1980-1981, there were two barbecues given - one in the fall and one in the spring.

The big iron pots for cooking the stew at the barbecues, were bought by the Clifton Freeman Bible Class and given to the church in 1981. They were ready for the Spring barbecue in May, 1981. This was a tremendously difficult job of doing away with termites in the church and replacing damaged parts. The bills soared beyond one thousand dollars. The following week the Spring Barbecue was given. Mrs. Mary Ballard headed both committees, for getting the exterminating done and for planning the barbecue. The indebtedness was paid in full and attention can be turned to other projects.

Mrs. Benhouse and Miss Kathryn House continue to serve faithfully and well as communion stewards. Mrs. House is also the keeper of the church membership and roll books and Kathryn has taught the Juniors at Sunday School for many years.
The Young Adult Class is paying for the copying of the NCNC newsletters for 1981 or two-thirds of the bill while Don Ballard picks up the other third. The papers are distributed in the entire North Covington community by four boys or girls each month, with the aid and supervision of Mrs. Don Ballard and the editor, Miss Eva Mask. The newsletter is a big, time-consuming project, but continues to pay off in community relationships.

Mrs. Gracie Lew (Gober) Whitley is now typing the Sunday Worship Service bulletins each week. Jeanette Weathers is the Finance Steward who counts the money on Sundays to help the treasurer, Olin Allen, who has served as treasurer many years. There are many dedicated people who have served and are serving now in places of leadership at North Covington as Sunday School Superintendents, and teachers, treasurers, lay leaders, official board members, musicians, and other faithful servants of God. Among the names of such workers that are found on this roll are: Allen, Ballard, Harnett, Bates, Berry, Bouchillon, Briscoe, Brooking, Bryant, Carroll, Carter, Cason, Chapman, Daughtrey, Dearing, Death, Darden, Eberhardt, Ecels, Freeman, Geiger, Gibbs, Gober, Granger, Grier, Hanson, Harmon, Hartsook, Henderson, Hiers, Hood, Hooten, Hopkins, House, Huckaby, Hunter, Hyatt, Johnson, Kitchens, Lester, Lockhart, Mask, Martin, McCrary, McGee, Newman, Odum, Oglesby, Palmer, Pullin, Redman, Richardson, Roberts, Robinson, Sams, Savage, Shannon, Sharpston, Smith, Speer, Standard, Steele, Stone, Strickland, Thompson, Tucker, Turlington, Vander, Weathers, Wicks, Whitley, Wiggins, Wiley, and Young.

It is because of the untiring efforts, and loyalty, and faithfulness of many families, that the present membership is able to enjoy worshiping at North Covington United Methodist Church today. The influence of the NCUMC in the community pays tribute to its founding fathers, as well as to its membership.

"Our years take a beautiful luster
And our hearts feel a wonderful thrill
For our loveliest memories cluster
In the little brick church on River's Hill."

(Mrs. Ophelia Mayo Mask—1945)

Miss Eva Mask
Historian
North Covington United Methodist Church
June 1981

('May 14 — August 26 )