HISTORY OF
RUSH CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1838 - 1981
CHARTER MEMBERS

1838

Mr. John Rush
Mrs. John Rush
Mr. Joseph Watters
Mrs. Joseph Watters
Mr. J.M. Lester
Mrs. J.M. Lester
Mr. Matthew Davenport
Mrs. Matthew Davenport
Mr. Houston Aycock
Mrs. Houston Aycock
In 1838 five early settler families, on becoming acquainted, found that they were all Methodist and at once began planning for a church building. These five families were: Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Lester, Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Daversort, Mr. and Mrs. Houston Aycock, Mr. and Mrs. John Rush, and Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Watters.

These families, after establishing their homes, were inspired to build a Methodist Church in which they, their children, and all the people of the community, of every race, could go and worship God.

These people secured an acre of land for the church and cemetery from Col. Isaac Fetten and built thereon a log cabin, known as Rush Chapel. Here the early settlers worshiped until about 1845. The log church was replaced by a frame structure.

In 1861 an addition was made to the church building. The pulpit, in those days, was at the front of the church and the congregation sat facing the doors. Late comers were duly noted by all. The ladies sat on one side of the church and the men on the other side. A raised section in the rear was reserved for black worshippers.

Some years later the black Methodists built a church for themselves about a half mile
away in the fork between Calhoun Road and Pinson Road. It was also known as Rush Chapel. This group later consolidated with Mount Sinai on Calhoun Road. The church building was moved back a few feet to make room for a service station and converted into a house. It later burned to the ground.

In 1910, during the ministry and leadership of Rev. O.L. Evans, a great need for a larger and more adequate place of worship was felt. Some of the old residents who helped or contributed to the work are as follows: Mrs. J.E. Reeve, Mrs. J.T. Watters, J.T. Watters, T.E. Perry, J.P. Rush, W.A. Rush, Mrs. A.E. Watters, Mrs. John Ward and sons, F.B. Burney. Watt Cunningham, who is still a resident of the community at this writing, helped with the steeple and put the tin roof on it to complete the construction in the spring of 1911. Men from the community helped in building the church, giving both of their time and money.

It is not definitely known who was the first pastor of Rush Chapel, though the church register shows that William Watters was received into the church on profession of faith in 1867 by the Rev. T.M. Hedger, pastor. Jackson Watters, brother of William, was supposedly the first member to be received into the church by profession of faith. It is thought that, like Mispah, supply preachers and circuit riders preached at various times during the year.
Among some of the early records of pastors and officials the following were recorded: in 1881; Rev. R.K. Johnston; pastor, William Hickey, local elder; William Watters, T.S. Burney, H.W. Sharp, William Nixon, stewards; C.W. Rush, J.M. Julton, A.H. Treadaway, class leaders; in 1886; Rev. J.E. Rosser, pastor; Rev. William H. Hickey, local preacher; Thomas S. Burney, George Green, H.W. Sharp, J.T. Watters, stewards; T.S. Burney, H.W. Sharp, class leaders, John P. Rush, Sunday School Superintendent.

The first Sunday School was organized over 100 years ago. The earliest superintendents were: H.W. Sharp, T.S. Burney, J.P. Rush, T.E. Perry, E.F. Padgett, D.E. Pennington, Mrs. Hiram Stephens, Ralph Perry. The present superintendent is Jack Dickey. The present enrollment is approximately 45.

The first Women's Foreign Missionary Society was organized at Rush Chapel in 1909 by Mrs. Burt Winters. The first president was Mrs. A.L. Stephens. Others serving as president were: Mrs. J.P. Rush, Mrs. J.T. Watters, Mrs. S.L. Rush, Mrs. M.M. Adams, Mrs. Hiram Stephens, Mrs. Grover Brinsen, and Miss Annie Laurie Rush is now president. The name was changed in 1940 to Women's Society of Christian Service and in 1967 to United Methodist Women. In 1975 a second group was formed to permit the working women to participate on a more regular basis. Both of these groups have contributed greatly to Christian fellowship and service. There are 30 members in the United Methodist women at this time.
There are other organizations carried out in our church. The Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized in the year 1918 with Mr. Lovick-Rush as first president. Other early members were Ruth Perry, Mattie Hunt, and Ira Dodd. This organization existed until about 1967 when a temporary lack of young people brought it to a halt. It is currently in the process of being reorganized.

In 1952, during the leadership of Rev. James Sanders, it was decided to build an annex to our sanctuary consisting of an assembly room and Sunday School class rooms. Plans were completed and construction begun in the fall.

In 1954-59 during the ministry of Rev. James Sanders, the youth under the leadership of Miss Annie Vance watters sponsored a fund raising for an organ which added greatly to our worship service and dedicated to the glory of God.

For many years Mrs. Betty Brinsen served as pianist. With the purchase of the organ she became organist and Sharon Swinford (Armstrong) pianist. Our present organist is Mrs. Sharon S. Armstrong and Mrs. Nancy Rush pianist.

Mrs. Aileen R. Woodard was director of the choir and music for a number of years. She was succeeded by our present director Mrs. Juanita Gaines. They are due our many thanks for their faithful leadership which has contributed so greatly to our music program.

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William T. Watters was a faithful and devoted member for many years. He served as trustee, member of official board, and served as treasurer. Mr. Watters always saw that all bills were taken care of and at times he dipped into his own pocket to meet the financial needs of Rush Chapel.

Within the better than a century Rush Chapel has been serving God's Kingdom, there has been a number of helpful, devoted, inspired men of God as pastors. For many years, Rev. William Hickey was almost devoted and active local preacher with us.

Rev. W. W. Brinsfield was a member of the North Georgia Conference for many years and he was a product of Rush Chapel. Brother Henry Sharp was not a preacher, but his long life of service and consecration made a lasting influence for good rarely surpassed by the work of any Christian. In 1905, Samuel L. Latimer was recommended for license to exhort. Brother John F. Rush contributed greatly to the impact of Christianity in this community for over half a century. His influence will be felt for generations to come.

Rev. A.B. Elizer was appointed pastor of the North Rome Charge in 1922 serving North Rome, Mizpah and Rush Chapel. North Rome had two services a month and Mizpah and Rush Chapel each having one. During brother Elizer's ministry he also served the Shannon-Oostanaula Charge.
Other ministers of the 40's to 60's were: Rev. Hubert Dodd, B.W. Hancock, P.V. Hall, Julian Brackman, and Larry Green. These men contributed greatly to the service and spiritual life of the church. We are greatly indebted to them.

During Rev. Jerry McCurdy's ministry in 1966-1968, Rush Chapel became a separate charge. While in the North Rome Circuit we had services only once a month, then with Mizpah this became every other Sunday. Later we had services every Sunday with ours at 10:00 a.m. and Mizpah's at 11:15 a.m. We continued this way until 1967 when we were given permission to be a separate station. A ground-breaking service was held February 24, 1968 for the building of Rush Chapel parsonage which was completed that year and the entire $14,600 cost paid in full. The ladies of the United Methodist Women were responsible for and did a fine job on furnishing the new parsonage.

Rev. Raymond Johnsen was appointed to Rush Chapel in 1968 but withdrew from the ministry shortly thereafter.

We were indeed fortunate to obtain the services of Dr. Jorge A. Gonzalez, a dedicated Christian, to come and serve until Conference. Dr. Gonzalez and his family fled from Cuba during the communist take-over of that country, sacrificing everything they had, to come to America where they could have freedom and could worship God as they saw fit.

Our beloved Rev. G.B. Henderson was appointed in 1968 and served devotedly.

The Young Adults sponsored furnishing and decorating a pastor's study in the church which was dedicated to the Rev. Henderson as a faithful servant of God. A bronze plaque hangs in the study noting 62 years as a minister and dedicates the study to the glory of God in memory of Rev. Henderson.

Rev. Dennis L. White, who sacrificed greatly to enter the ministry, was appointed to Rush Chapel in October, 1974 while attending Emory University.

A public address system was installed in the sanctuary and in the nursery during the time Rev. White was with us.

In 1977, Rev. White left Rush Chapel and Georgia to return to his home state of Florida to minister there.

Rev. R. Michael Cavin, a student at Emory University, was appointed pastor in 1977. During his time at Rush Chapel a new Sunday School Class was organized for the Younger Adults. Each committee as set forth by the Discipline was re-activated and trained by Rev. Cavin in the duties and responsibilities it held. This training both educated and motivated those involved and great benefit was seen by the church.
Rev. D. Kirk Bozeman began his ministry at Rush Chapel in 1979, while beginning seminary at Emory University. The church has continued to develop its outreach in the community and the District, and the United Methodist Men's Fellowship has become a strong and active group. Structural work to the church building itself includes rebuilding the choir loft, additional closets built in the fellowship hall, and a fire escape. Active plans include the addition of a ramp for the handicapped to enter the sanctuary, and the installation of headphones for the hearing impaired.

In the past several years our church has grown in both membership and outreach.

Compiled By:
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Historian