HISTORY OF ST. LUKE METHODIST CHURCH

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1966
The Celanese Methodist Church grew out of a movement which started as a two-denomination Sunday School, consisting of Methodist and Baptist denominations. This group was organized at the Tubize School some time after the erection of the Tubize Chatillon plant and village in 1929. For several years, the Methodists and Baptists alternated in having speakers each Sunday. The First Methodist speakers were laymen from various Methodist Churches in Rome.

In the Autumn of 1933, Rev. H. G. Garrett, a Methodist pastor from Floyd Springs community made a survey of the Tubize community and found a large number of Methodists living there. J. W. O. McKibben, the Presiding Elder of the Rome District at that time, was called in and informed of Rev. Garrett's findings. To satisfy the religious needs of the community, the Tubize Methodist Church was organized with approximately 40 charter members.

Serving on the original Board of Stewards were W. M. Hurley, chairman; C. S. Berry, secretary and treasurer; Mrs. M. L. Crabtree (Spurlin); J. L. Vanidver; J. S. Stancil; T. C. Steed; and Eugene Bell. Rev. Garrett served as pastor until the Annual conference of 1934.

The Annual conference of 1934 sent W. G. Irwin as pastor and the Charge included Shannon, Tubize, Beech Creek, Mt. Pleasant and Oostanaula.

The first parsonage was established for Rev. Irwin at 7 Juniper Street. This was a 3 room house and was sufficient for the pastor, however, the parsonage was later moved to a 5 room house located at 31 Elmwood Street.

In 1935, the Woman's Missionary Society was organized at the home of Mrs. Frank Muschamp, and Mrs. Elbert (Bessie) Ross was elected as its first
President. The Charter members included Mrs. Ross, Rev. Irwin, Mrs. Perry Caldwell, Mrs. C. J. Raley, Miss Jessie Ross, and Mrs. Muschamp. Also in 1935, a joint revival was held by both churches at the Tubize Ball Park. The year 1936 was a milestone for Tubize churches. Many events took place that year that enhanced the church membership rolls and strengthened church ties. In this year, a tent revival was held in the vacant lot where the Baptist Pastoriium now stands. Great crowds came to worship and enjoy the evangelistic sermons of Rev. Perry Brannon from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Many new church members were added to the church rolls at this revival.

With the church membership increasing, talk started to spread about building a new church. The ever increasing need for a new church to provide for the increased membership, also increased interest in the project. With so much interest, the new church was almost a certainty.

In September 1936, Rev. Irwin left Tubize to teach and pastor at Rhinehart College. Rev. Irwin served well as the first appointed pastor of Tubize Methodist Church. Harry Free from Lindale finished Rev. Irwin's term as pastor of the Tubize Church.

The Annual Conference of 1936 sent Rev. Louie Huckaby as pastor to Tubize. During his term as pastor, from 1936 to 1939, 31 new members had joined the church. With membership increasing in both the Methodist and Baptist churches, the need for a new church was impressed in the minds of all members. The Tubize Company, also realizing this need, saw that the people were willing to work and raise funds for the erection of a new church, and offered to build it for them.
In October of 1939, the new brick church building was completed at the corner of Dogwood and Ash Street. An elaborate dedication ceremony was held with plant and church officials taking part in the activities. Tubize plant manager, R. C. Jones, and W. H. Baves, played a great part in making the new church building possible. The cost of the new building was approximately $18,000.

The day of the church opening, Miss Willie Walker (Company Nurse) and Larry O'Neil were married in the new building. Both denominations (Methodist and Baptist) were very proud of their new building and each denomination held services on alternating Sundays. The Baptist held services on first and third Sundays of each month, and the Methodists on second and fourth Sundays.

The Annual Conference of 1939 sent Rev. J. K. Kelly as pastor of the Tubize, Shannon, and Oostanaula churches, and the Beech Creek and Mount Pleasant churches were transferred to another charge. Rev. Kelly's family was larger than that of his predecessors, therefore, it was necessary to secure a larger parsonage located at 6 Elmwood Street. This was a six room brick structure and is still the home of the Methodist Church pastors.

During his term as pastor, Rev. Kelly and the Baptist Minister, Rev. S. H. Pendley worked together faithfully and cooperatively to further the goals of both churches. Both pastors had very fruitful and successful pastorates at Tubize and are still greatly loved by the people of the community. During Rev. Kelly's term as pastor at Tubize (1939 to 1944) there were 10 new members added to the church roll. Also during his stay, Mrs. Kelly's cousin, Miss Kate Cooper, a missionary to Korea, visited with them and was an inspiration to church members that met and knew her.

In 1944, Rev. C. Herman Smith came as pastor to Tubize. Aside from
his pastoral duties, he attended Berry College. In June 1945, the Tubize and Shannon churches were made full time charges and Rev. Smith was sent to Shannon as full time pastor. During his stay at Tubize, there were 19 new members added to the church rolls.

In 1945, Rev. W. J. Lamb was sent as pastor to the Tubize church. Like Rev. Smith, he completed his college work while at Tubize. During Rev. Lamb's first year at Tubize, a tent revival was held in the vacant lot next to the church. During Brother Lamb's stay, the Celanese Corporation of America bought the Tubize Corporation, and the church names were changed to Celanese Methodist and Baptist Churches. Rev. Lamb served faithfully for 3 years and 86 new members were added to the church rolls. When Rev. Lamb came to Celanese, he had one daughter (Jackie - 4 years old) and during his stay, another daughter (Becky) was born. During his term as pastor, the Celanese Mem's Club was organized (1947), and John Hurley was elected as its first President.

Rev. T. C. Ford came as pastor to Celanese Methodist Church in 1948. Celanese Corporation employees were on strike in this year and times were hard for all concerned. With the pastor's guidance, the church upheld its Christian standards and the troubled times finally ended. Rev. Ford could be commended for his excellent work during this troubled time.

The Annual Conference of 1949 sent Rev. W. Jack Atha as pastor to Celanese to carry on the work of Rev. Ford and those before him. Rev. Atha served well as pastor for two years and during this period, 94 new members were added to the church rolls. In 1950, the charter members of the church still remaining were Mrs. Ben Bell, Mrs. C. J. Raley, Mrs. V. C. Andrews, Mrs. and Mr. W. M. Hurley, John B. Hurley, Mrs. Ivanell Hurley Boggs, Mrs. Berta Lee Hurley Weber, Mr. J. S. Whithurst, and Mrs. M. L. Crabtree Spurlin.
Rev. Forrest King came to Celanese as pastor in 1951. He served for two years and during this time, he helped organize the new West Rome Methodist Church. While Rev. King was pastor at Celanese, there were 31 additions to the church membership roll.

In 1953, Rev. Garnett M. Wilder was appointed as pastor to Celanese Methodist Church. During his second year as pastor at Celanese, the Celanese Corporation of America sold all houses and lots in the village to their occupants and gave title of the church building and grounds to the two denominations.

Under an agreement worked out by the two churches, the Baptist Church gave the Methodist Church $25,000 for its equity in the church building and lot and was retained by the Baptist Church. The Methodist applied this amount on a new $88,000 building. Under the arrangement, the Celanese Corporation not only gave the two churches title to the church building and grounds, but also provided the lot on which the new Methodist Church was to be erected. In addition, the company made an outright gift to the two churches of the two six room parsonages being used for their pastors. The Celanese engineers served as architects and designers for the new Methodist Church. These men included Herman Tichler, W. T. Goodwin, H rold Hunter, B. W. Rule and a Mr. Couch. F. W. Dunn was Chairman of the building committee and committee members were Roy Freeman, D. L. Brown, J. M. Sherrill, and A. C. Rhinehart.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held Sunday, October 10, 1954 for the construction of the new church. The Church was to be a complete church plant with a 200 capacity sanctuary, education facilities, kitchen and fellowship hall, church office and lounge.

After the dedication of the church site, the Rev. Wilder asked Mr. W. E. Crooks, Manager of the Rome Celanese plant, to turn the first shovel of
earth. He was followed by Rev. J. Hamby Barton, District Superintendent; Rev. Wilder and his wife; F. W. Dunn, Chairman of the Building Committee; Mrs. V. Carlton Angle, W. S. C. S. President; and other church officials; also the contractor, Mr. Clint Trammell turned a shovel of earth.

Because of seemingly unavoidable delays, the construction was not begun immediately following the groundbreaking. The loan of $30,000 was received from Citizens Federal Savings and Loan Association in Rome. The church deed was signed on February 15, 1955 and on February 21, 1955, the tool house was erected for use in building the church. On March 2, 1955, excavation was begun for the erection of the new church. Church members pitched in and helped with various parts of the construction work and made it possible for the erection of a better church with the funds available.

Rev. Wilder left Celanese on May 30, 1955, to further his college work at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. He was appointed as pastor of the Woodstock Parish in New York. In the period between May 30, and Annual Conference, the Celanese church was without a pastor. During this period, church services were held by various lay speakers from the Rome area. Forty seven new members were added to the church rolls during Rev. Wilder's stay, and total membership when he left was 281 members.

The Annual Conference of June, 1955, appointed Rev. Larry A. Bauman as pastor to the Celanese Methodist Church. Being a young and energetic man, he was full of enthusiasm for doing God's work and the church moved forward. During his stay, he did much for the church and community, for he loved people and loved serving God.

New new church building was completed in January, 1956, and Rev. Bauman preached the first sermon in it on January 8, 1956, to a record attendance of members, former members, and friends. This was a great day for the church and even though Baptist friends would be missed, both denominations knew that God's work
could be carried out better if both churches were on a full time basis.

Rev. J. Hamby Burton, District Superintendent for the Rome District, from 1954 to 1960, was very much interested in the work of the Celanese Church and gave his full support to it. He contributed much of his time and money to the building fund and helped in any way that he could.

During the time plans were being drawn for the new building, the ladies of the church had been busy raising funds to furnish the new kitchen for the church that they had dreamed of having. Mrs. V. C. Angle, President of the W. S.C.S. from June 1952 to June 1956, with the help of the W.S.C.S. members and church members, funds were raised to completely furnish the kitchen, pay for the cabinets, and pay for kneeling pads for the church altar.

Ladies that served as members of the building committee were Mrs. V.C. Angle, Mrs. Jim Cox, Mrs. F. W. Dunn, Mrs. R. A. Tucker, and Mrs. Jim Whithurst.

In January, 1956, Mrs. V. C. Angle was appointed Leprosy Fund Chairman. Pig banks were placed in each Sunday School class and the money received through these pigs were sent to the leprosy field through the United Church Women of Rome, of which our women are a part. The total amount of money sent to the leprosy field from January, 1956 to April, 1962 was $268.00.

After the new building was completed, the need for shrubbery was seen. On Easter Sunday, 1956, all who so desired gave a memorial offering in memory of some loved one who had passed away and shrubbery was planted by Starnes Nursery. This project added much to the beauty of the church.

In 1957, a very active Wesleyan Service Guild was organized and its first President was Mrs. Clyde Smith. Also in this year, it was decided to have a homecoming, commemorating the first anniversary in the new church. A large
crowd attended this ceremony and it was decided to continue this event every year on the Sunday nearest the 8th of January.

On Wednesday, April 9, 1958, J. M. Sherrill, one of the church's most loyal members passed away. He had served as Sunday School Superintendent, Chairman of the Official Board, and many other offices. The Adult Fellowship group was later named the Joe Max Sherrill Adult Fellowship.

In July, 1958, another loyal member, Ernest Roy James, passed away. He had served faithfully for many years as Church Treasurer, and did an excellent job. Later that same year, his widow, Josephine Latham James, gave the church $500 for the purchase of books for a new library. The new library was named the Ernest R. James Library, and was located in the room formerly used as a lounge. Dedication services were held with members of his family and close friends attending. A marker was placed on the door of the library showing it to be the E.R. James Library.

Also in this period, the Official Board of the church along with church members that wished to, started a fund to purchase an electric organ for the church sanctuary. In the early part of 1959, need arose for more Sunday School rooms and three new rooms were built in the basement beneath the sanctuary. The newly organized Young Couples class moved into one of these rooms when they were completed.

Rev. and Mrs. Bauman had one son, Larry IV, when they came to Celanese. Two other children, Cecil Davis Bauman, and Julie Ann Bauman were born while they were here. Rev. Bauman served as pastor of the Celanese church from June 1955 to June 1959. Part of this time he served as Chaplin of Battey State Hospital along with his other duties at Celanese. He served well at both stations
and 115 new members were added to the rolls of the church during his stay. In 1959, a committee was appointed to revise the church rolls and it was found that the church had a membership of 318 members.

Rev. Marvin O. Brewer came to Celanese in 1959 and served also as Chaplin of Battey State Hospital along with his other duties. Rev. and Mrs. Brewer were both true servants of God, serving wherever the need might exist. During their stay, there were 9 new members added to the church rolls.

Rev. A. D. Whittemore came to Celanese as pastor in 1960 and served faithfully until 1962. The charter members that remained in the church at the time of Rev. Whittemore’s departure were Mrs. V. C. Andrews, Mrs. W. M. Hurley, John B. Hurley, Mrs. Ivanelle Hurley Boggs, Mrs. Berta Lee Hurley Weber, J. S. Whithurst, and Mrs. M. L. Crabtree Spurlin.

Rev. and Mrs. Edward Cadle and their family moved to Celanese in June of 1962. At the beginning of Rev. Cadles' ministry at Celanese he held a revival. It was a good meeting with the attendance averaging 155 each night. Everyone was spiritually blessed.

During the Cadle's first year, a new car port was built and an extra bath was added to the parsonage. These additions help make the parsonage a little more convenient.

Mrs. E. E. Ringer presented the church with four beautiful gold offering plates in memory of her husband. Mr. Ringer had been an active member of our church. These plates will always be treasured and used by the members of our church.

In 1964 the conference inaugurated a Retired Preachers Day. Our church was the first to honor a preacher. We selected to honor Rev. W. L. Brackman. He preached for us on Sunday morning. Our church presented him with a gift and we enjoyed a day of fellowship.
One of our greater achievements during Rev. Cadle's stay here was our financial status. He lead a Stewardship Program which strengthened the church financially as well as spiritually. Many people worked hard to make this program a success but most of the success was due to our pastor's determination. The members pledged a total of $19,000.00. At present, we are more than meeting this pledge.

Our missionary giving increased from approximately $200.00 a year to $1,000.00. The Children's Day offering more than doubled in the last conference year over the three previous years. We gave $527.00 this year to the Methodist Children's Home.

Mrs. Mather Daniel presented the church with a parchment set in memory of her husband. Mather was an active member of our church. His spiritual life meant much in the growth of our church.

The Young Adult Class held a dedication service on June 12 in memory of Mather Daniel. Mrs. Dee Bates and Baxter presented the class with a plaque which read the Mather Daniel Sunday School Class. Jane Wilson accepted the plaque for the class. He organized the class and was its only teacher until his death. His teaching and example of a fine Christian man will always be remembered by his class.

The conference recently approved the acquisition of approximately an acre and a half of property behind the church for the proposed parsonage. This land was purchased from the Celanese Corporation. Jack Miller is the Building Committee Chairman and is working hard to complete plans before this conference year ends. A committee has also been elected to discuss the proposal to air condition the church. Both committees are working hard to complete plans so
work can begin early next conference year.

The Celanese Fibers Corp. requested that the name of the church be changed not using the company name. After this request, a committee was elected and they began work on selecting a new name for our church. The members of the church gave the committee name suggestion and the committee came to an agreement on the top five names suggested. On Rev. Cadle's last Sunday at Celanese the members present in the congregation voted on the names. St. Luke received the largest amount of votes so the name was changed from the Celanese Methodist Church to the St. Luke Methodist Church.

As this year ends, our church loses Rev. Cadle and his family. Their service here has meant much to the spiritual growth and the material achievements of our church. We pray God's blessings on them as they continue their work in the South Georgia Conference.

History received May 6, 1967
Present pastor Rev. Wm. B. Edwards, Jr.