A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH

The Social Circle Methodist Church was established in 1829 on land located on the East side of the Main Street, two years before the town was incorporated.

In 1834 the Georgia Railroad purchased the property and the Church bought land on the opposite side of the street, and a frame structure was built. Later this building was moved further over on the lot and converted into Oak Grove school house. A larger frame church was built.

In 1907 all of the old church except the frame was torn down and the present sanctuary plus two small rooms and a vestibule were completed with a basement dug for a furnace room for heat. Beautiful stained glass windows, ceiling fans, new benches and floor carpets were a part of the improvement of this new cement block veneered building.

In 1948 the church was completely renovated, new carpets installed and a modern two-story red brick educational building with a kitchen, recreational room and two rest rooms added. About this time a Hammond organ and Deagan chimes were installed.

In 1950 the parsonage next door to the church was also renovated. The rooms papered, floor sanded, furniture refin­ished, and some new added, gas heat was installed and the house painted.

The two-story red-brick youth building, Bowers Memorial Chapel and Pastor's study were built and furnished in 1958. One class room upstairs has been equipped as a church library.

The entire building of the three connected units was painted white in 1959.

A modern three-bedroom red-brick parsonage was completed in 1962 and dedicated April 21, 1963. The old parsonage was torn away and the new one built on the same lot.

The Church has air-conditioning added in 1965. Memorial windows replaced the clear glass windows in the chapel in 1966.

So much for the mechanics of the buildings.

Behind the history of any church building are those people who actually compose the church. Many persons have found in this fellowship of believers a place to worship, give service with devotion and express their faith with reverence.
Being a part of the North Georgia Conference of The Methodist Church, this congregation has been a part of five districts; Atlanta, Athens, Oxford, Decatur-Oxford, and since 1962 Athens-Elberton.

The congregation has had many distinguished and well-equipped pastors and presiding elders and District Superintendents. It is interesting to note that at a District Conference held in this church March 5, 1975, the late Bishop Warren Candler was licensed to preach. In 1869, when a part of the Monroe Circuit, this charge had 265 white members and 11 Negroes.

For many years Social Circle and Rutledge were a charge. Social Circle became a station appointment in 1954.

At least three members from this church; namely, Mel Simons, Clyde Lee, and Ronnie Flowers have become Ministers and members of the North Georgia Conference.

The laity too, has had many outstanding men and women who have served well and witnessed a great faith. For more than 30 years this church furnished leadership in the District level for the Women's Work. A number of laymen have been certified lay-speakers. Young people have witnessed to their faith and expressed a desire for full-time Christian Service.

A listing of names would be like, "The Endless Line of Splendor" for their good works have been legion.

Rarely did a Visiting Minister enter the pulpit without words of praise and appreciation for the beauty and worshipful atmosphere of the church's interior, especially mentioning the welcoming appearance of the red carpet and the elegance of the stained glass memorial windows.

Then on June 21, 1969, tragedy struck! A fire of undetermined origin destroyed the entire plant. Fire departments from Monroe, Covington, and Jersey joined the local fire department and battled against overwhelming odds. The intense heat turned all efforts to naught. On the Sunday morning following, only the twin bell towers stood amid the smouldering ruins as a grim reminder of what was a beautiful sanctuary. The towers later collapsed as if their regal dignity was out of place amidst the distress of the hour.

The Pastor, Rev. James W. Thurman, Jr., wrote in the church bulletin the following week: "Sunday, June 22, will always be remembered as a day of "crisis"! But the Social Circle United Methodist Church is still in business, we've
lost our meeting place--yet the Church is of God and is composed of the people of God. This crisis will make us more resourceful, revealing to us strengths we never knew we possessed". And so it has proven to be.

The official board met the Sunday evening before the embers were cool and took steps to begin a "Church Building Fund Account". Checks began coming in even that first day, hymnals were sent from Newborn Methodist Church, and the Church began its long pull amidst tears and hope.

Services were temporarily held in the High School Cafeteria and church school classes in the schoolrooms. Soon a large frame home next door to the church grounds became available. It was purchased for $12,000.00, and classrooms, nursery, kitchen, assembly room and rest rooms were made ready for immediate use. The Chapel Annex was redeemed from its ruins of water, smoke and crushed side and restored to usefulness.

In this much beloved Chapel double sessions were held for the duration. One service at 9 A.M. and a repeat service at the regular 11 A.M. hour. All activities continued in church related program. Many new activities were begun as every church school class, the Woman's Society of Christian Service, The Wesleyan Service Guild, the Methodist Men's Club, etc. made group pledges to the building fund.

A Program of Progress Crusade was launched. The Rev. Jesse H. Lanning from the Department of Finance and Field Service of the Board of Missions as director came into town for a week and all wheels started rolling.

The Charge Conference elected a Building Committee with N. L. Lipscomb as Chairman, L. Howard Barton, Miss Amy Bowers, L. S. Duval, L. C. Hart, W. H. Simons, W. B. Stephens, Jr., J. F. Walton, and Fred P. Wiley as members. We break into our line of thinking at this point for a thought in memory of two of this Committee who died before the building was finished. They are Miss Amy Bowers and Mr. Joe P. Walton.

The Rev. Thurman never displayed a feeling of defeat, but said, "the Lord is with us", reminding his people of a quote from Augustine, who said, "Without God, we cannot, without us, God will not."

The first Service in the new Sanctuary was held January 31, 1971. It had been a long time since June 21, 1969.
To put the dates together for clarity:

June 21, 1969 - Fire! Church destroyed.
June 22, 1969 - Official Board named Building Fund Committee.
July 13, 1969 - Charge Conference authorized Building
April 19, 1970 - Ground Breaking Service
January 31, 1971 - First Service in new Sanctuary.

Much work, sacrifice, prayer and devotion has gone into the months. The Educational and Activities buildings will come in the future. At the time of this writing, the "Consecration Service" is planned for May 30, 1971.
Hopefully a dedication service will be held in a few years.

The first revival in the new facilities was held April 11-16, 1971 with the Reverend Albert Bruce and the Reverend Landon Carey as Minister and Song Leader.