South Bend Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1886 from Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church that was located on the corner of Jonesboro Road and Lakewood Terrace in what is now known as Lakewood Heights. Oakland Church was organized in 1868 as a mission from Evans Chapel which later became Walker Street Church, then later and is now known as Mary Brannan Memorial Church.

The property for Oakland Church was donated by Colonel John Miller Clark Reid, a Colonel in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Colonel Reid realized the need of a church in this growing community and did much toward the organization. Among the charter members were: Colonel and Mrs. Reid, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Thurman, Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Todd, Sr., Mr. Robert E. Todd, Jr., and Mr. George Todd. The church grew and was the scene of many revivals and meetings. On one special occasion Governor Alfred Colquitt and General Clement Evans were guest speakers. Later the Atlanta Water Works was to be located at Lakewood and this necessitated the removal of the cemetery which was across the road from the church. The cemetery and church was moved to the present location and named South Bend because it was located in the South Bend District, thus has been known as South Bend Methodist Church ever since. The first pastor was Rev. Brooks. The church grew and was a vital part of the community. Among some of the pastors serving on this charge were: Rev. M. M. Marks, Rev. O. B. Quillian, Rev. W. E. Tarpley, Rev. R. A. Seals, Rev. W. O. Butler, Rev. M. L. Underwood, Rev. Dock Dodson, Rev. W. J. Robinson, Rev. I. P. Meese, Rev. E. K. Akin, and Rev. Bob Eakes.

The church continued to play a vital part of this community for spiritual enrichment for members young and old, as well as, the community at large when a tragedy struck the congregation. On Easter Sunday morning, April 9, 1939 the Rev. Fred Gwin, had completed the devotional part of the Easter service, and was preparing to give his text when a member noted a wisp of smoke in the ceiling.
around the flue and called his attention to it. Rev. Gwin went outside to investigate and found the entire north end of the roof ablaze. He came back inside and asked the congregation to quietly file out, the church was on fire. Members were able to save the piano, twenty-one pews and some song books before the entire roof fell in. The fire was attributed to a defective flue from a stove in the middle of the church, which was the only source of heat. The fifty-three year old frame structure was a total loss within approximately ten minutes after the fire was discovered. The estimated loss was valued at $7000. There was no insurance due to small membership and further handicapped by some of the members being out of work.

This group of sixty-five members realizing the need of a church in this community, set to work making plans to rebuild. Sunday School and preaching services were held in the homes of the members until a small tabernacle was erected on the northwest corner of the church property. The first services were held Sunday, May 21, 1939 by the pastor with seventy-three for Sunday School and sixty-two for preaching. It was on this Sunday the members resolved that the third Sunday in May would always be observed as Homecoming Day at South Bend. The members under the leadership of Rev. Fred Gwin immediately began making plans to rebuild the church.

A Building Committee was appointed to look into plans. The following were elected by the Quarterly Conference: R. E. Tarleton, Chairman, W. L. Duncan, Homer L. Pair, M. J. Sullivan, and Miss Levata Jordan, Secretary and Treasurer.

The splendid response of the members, and generous donations from their friends, neighboring churches, and the public in money, material and labor made it possible to start the new church in late August 1939. A modern frame structure of fifty feet long, thirty feet wide, the choir loft, twelve by fourteen feet, also two Sunday School rooms across the back seventeen by fourteen feet. Upon completion of the church a furnace was installed.
So it was, on November 12, 1939, the spirit of Christian men, women, and children working together was crowned with victory once again — not only was the church building completed, but it was also free of debt, consecrated, and turned over to the North Georgia Conference. As the congregation came to worship on the first Sunday in their new sanctuary, the Rev. Fred Gwin re-read the scripture from which he had read on that memorable Easter Sunday, almost nine months before. Rev. D. C. Starnes assisted in the morning service and special music by Mrs. Ernest Bell. Following the morning service, a basket dinner was served in the church yard. In the afternoon there were addresses by Perry Bloodworth and Ernest Bell, also short talks by former members.

Twenty-nine members were united with the church during the year. The church was in the Griffin District under Dr. R. L. Russell as District Superintendent.

The pastor, Rev. Fred Gwin, conducted the morning service followed by the laying of the cornerstone. The cornerstone was not laid on opening Sunday due to an error in the lettering but was laid on April 7, 1940 one year after the first sanctuary was destroyed. A basket dinner was served in the church yard. The following ministers from neighboring churches were asked to take part in the afternoon program: Rev. Jesse Henderson, Rev. W. B. Carr, Rev. T. M. Elliott, and Rev. H. E. McBrayer. The music was furnished by several quartets and the choir of the church. At three o'clock Rev. E. C. Wilson delivered the dedication sermon for South Bend Methodist Church.

The following were appointed officers for the year 1940: TRUSTEES — Robert E. Todd, Jr., Homer L. Pair, W. L. Duncan, R. E. Tarleton, and W. J. Grogan; STEWARDS — R. E. Tarleton, Chairman, Homer L. Pair, H. L. Pate, W. L. Duncan, Joe A. Reid, J. F. Carter, Mrs. Mary Sullivan and Miss Latata Jordan.

The tabernacle remained on the church property after the new church was erected to be used to hold evening meetings, social gatherings during the
summer, later it was floored and sides put up and this became the home of the Men's Bible Class.

The new church continued to prosper under the leadership of Rev. Fred Gwin until his death in 1947. His passing was a great loss to the church and community.

The history up to now was written by Miss Lavata Jordan and Mr. Robert E. Todd. Miss Jordan and Mr. Todd were active in the very early days of South Bend Church and was most instrumental in the rebuilding of a church after the fire.

The members of South Bend having passed the test of sacrificial service once, was more eager to respond when came the call for sacrifice again. Many said building a parsonage was an impossible task, but some of the members were convinced that the impossible takes but a little longer to achieve. In 1951 the Rev. Jesse Warwick led his people into another building program. Many of the church members worked untiringly and the present brick parsonage became a reality. It was finished and furnished in 1952 at a value of $16,000. Only one half of the life of the mortgage was used and the parsonage was free of debt.

In 1957 the church started to look back over the past accomplishments with great pride, but still wanted to achieve even more, so a long range building program was initiated. Plans were drawn for a new Sanctuary and Educational Building Complex for a total cost of $150,000. Due to the high cost of the Complex and a small membership it was decided that plans for the Educational Building be approved for $30,000. The program to cover the $30,000 was accomplished by the sale of bonds. Rev. Danny Morris contacted the Southern Bureau For Fund Development to handle the sale of bonds which was to cover a period of thirteen years. With the new Educational Building completed the Men's Club saw the need for an organ in the church. They made
plans, purchased the present organ and presented it to the church in 1959.

In 1964 the indebtedness on the Educational Building was paid in full, six years ahead of the scheduled thirteen years. Planning then got underway to build the new sanctuary. The drawings were submitted to the church at a Charge Conference for approval. The plans were approved by the Conference and, at this time, authority was given to W. L. Duncan and George W. Copeland to sign a contract with Buttrill Construction Company to start the building for a cost of $78,200. Also authority was given at this Conference to purchase the house and property adjoining the church property from Mrs. Colbert. The purchase of this property was completed during this year.

After much planning and many prayers, 1966 saw South Bend's real dream come true. Under the leadership of Rev. Carl A. Standard the ground breaking service was held on January 2, 1966 for the new sanctuary. With the construction nearing completion, the old church had to be removed so the parking area could be paved. Once again the spirit of Christian unity was demonstrated when the men and young people started taking down the old structure piece by piece. The new sanctuary was completed and completely furnished. All of the furnishings were placed as memorials by the members. The first service was held on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1966 and the consecration service held on May 15, 1966. The cross that was initially in the sanctuary was a small wooden cross, it was later replaced by the present lighted cross. The new cross was made by a member, Mr. George W. Copeland. It was first lighted on Easter Sunday, April 6, 1969 by Thomas E. Turner and presented to the church by Ronald E. Turner. Rev. Carl A. Standard accepted the cross on behalf of the church. This cross was also a memorial.

In 1970 South Bend participated in the Exchange of Methodist Ministers. Rev. and Mrs. Leroy Smith exchanged pulpits with Rev. and Mrs. John W. Crofton of Clevedon, England. This was the first time that the church participated in
The year 1976 was perhaps the greatest year in the history of South Bend. The dedication of the sanctuary was held Easter Sunday, April 18, 1976, the mortgage having been paid in full, six months ahead of schedule. Rev. Kenneth Ray held special services commemorating this very special occasion with Dr. A. C. Epps burning the mortgage on July 4, 1976.

The parsonage was beginning to need some repair. Rev. Gary Karoly, having the ability to do the repairs, completely renovated the parsonage in 1976. When his work was finished, it was as if it was a new home. Immediately after this the church was able to sell the house and property adjoining the church property to Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Cain.

By this time Atlanta had begun to grow and the small community at South Bend started moving to the suburbs. Over the next few years, a "faithful few" held on to South Bend. Finally on January 5, 1986, it was determined by the last few, Mr. & Mrs. W. L. Duncan, Mr. & Mrs. H. L. Pair, Mr. & Mrs. Edwin L. Hardy, Mr. & Mrs. R. G. Chamblee, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Drellich, Miss Lucile Merck, Mrs. Josephine Henneyc, Mrs. Emmie C. Martin, Mrs. Rachel Jolley, Mrs. Rebecca Burke and Mrs. Elyse Brumbalow, that South Bend should be given to the North Georgia Conference so it could be used to its fullest capacities for the Kingdom of God. It is the hope that the new congregation will find what we found here, Love, Mercy, Grace, and Blessings in abundance.

South Bend United Methodist Church has been blessed to have had the following ministers to grace her pulpit since the fire on April 9, 1939: Rev. Fred Gwin, Rev. G. C. White, Rev. Harry Tarsch, Rev. Jesse H. Warwick, Rev. W. D. Spence, Rev. Danny Morris, Rev. J. A. Langford, Rev. Carl A. Standard, Rev. Leroy Smith, Rev. Tommy Roberts, Rev. James A. Harrison, Rev. John A. Giglio, Rev. Kenneth Ray, Rev. Luther Porter, Rev. Gary Karoly,

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