HISTORY

of

CALHOUN CHARGE

Wesley Chapel
This church is located about nine miles east of Calhoun, Georgia, Gordon County. At the present time the circuit is composed of four churches viz: Pine Chapel, Mount Pleasant, Wesley Chapel and Farmville.

As for parsonages, our present one is in Calhoun but in the years past as our church was moved from circuit to circuit, so our parsonages were changed.

In the past, Wesley has been with Calhoun, now First Church, then Pine Log and Fairmount, with old Shiloh. Then much later were one of Calhoun Circuit.

The church was organized by Thomas Gannaway, a local preacher, who also gave the ground for the church. The first was a lot of 4 1/2 acres, a parcel was added to this to enlarge the cemetery.

The first church was a log building heated by a huge fireplace filled with burning logs. This building was already there when the deed was written. The deed was dated June 29th, 1853.

There were nine of the first Trustees, Wm. T. Jones, Benjamin Kiker, Robertson Kiker, James Dawson, Thomas Gannaway, O. C. Campbell, Ephraim Woodward, John W. Dowdle, and John Slaton.

The church was named for John Wesley, and the church members were of Spartan blood-christians who not only believed in fasting and prayer but practiced it.
A little leather covered book of the church carried this admonition in the front; Dear Bretheren, Remember the Friday before each Quarterly Conference is a day of fasting and prayer for the prosperity of Zion.

Yours,

J. M. Glenn, P. E.
W. Anthony, P. C.

They held conference once a month at which time the spiritual well-being of the members was looked into. Class leaders held class meetings and the members were expected to attend, unless excused.

Some were tried "for their besetting sin", others for non-fellowship.

Some of the early family names were Robertson, Gannaway, Nichols, Moss, Love, Dawson, Hope, Kiker, Campbell and Boyd. Names later were Ellis, Harmon, Harris, Hayes, Morrison, Dempsey and Pittman. This was among the earliest churches in this section of the country.


Presiding Elders, or District Superintendents, that we were able to find were Rev. J. M. Glenn, H. J. Adams, A. W. Williams, Thrailkill, A. W. Harris, Dr. John Yarbrough, Rev. C. M. Lipham and Rev. Peter Manning.
In the early years, the church, no doubt was served by local preachers. Then came the war years of the war between the states, and the church lost some of her members in battle, still others, who were sorely needed died at home.

Somehow, the little church survived and renewed interest shown in the early 70's until September 4th, 1875. A meeting was called, at which time a committee was appointed to select a site and superintend the erection of a new church. They discussed moving to the Calhoun road, but five of the seven voted to stay at the same place. B. J. Hope was chairman of this committee, others being O. C. Campbell, Albert Nichols, John Love, J. L. Moss, J. B. Boyd and Jesse Stewart.

This church was built in front of the log church, and completed in 1876. The pastor, Rev. P. C. Reynolds, was assisted by a visiting preacher, Rev. Alvin Green Dempsey, who preached the dedication sermon. He preached on the Building of the Ark and the Power fell. Many were saved, and the church made a wonderful start.

In this time the church not only lost some by removal, but gained families whose strength of character and Christian foundation proved to be a great help to it. Grandma Boyd was one.

At this time, a community Sunday School was held at Sonora, as it was called then, but in 1877 W. W. Campbell was appointed S. S. Superintendent, and organized a school which was reported a success, having an average attendance of 44.

It seems that the church failed to pay all of the pastors' salary for the past year, so they were paying $21.00 on that. This was how they fulfilled their obligation.
In the winter of '79 Sunday School was suspended for the winter, but it seems that we have had school through the years since, sometimes small, but sometimes large for a country church. The information up to this time gathered from a small church book, the Secretary B. J. Hope was concise and wrote a good clear hand with an understanding of the church regulations. Thank you little book, and your writer, for leaving us this recording.

In 1891 Rev. E. M. Stanton ran a tent meeting and huge crowds came with a great revival. The crowds increased until in 1892 a large tabernacle was built. Rev. Hamby was pastor at this time. When the building was finished (it was on the same spot as the first church) the Bishop came and dedicated it.

In the first years of this century, a church was organized, (with most of the members coming from Wesley) about 3 or 4 miles away and called Owens Chapel. So many of the members were Owens', or related to them. This church thrived for a few years and filled a need to reach a community. So many of the leaders moved away, and the church decided to surrender the church property to the conference. Many of the members returned to the Chapel.

After all the years, part of the members became dissatisfied and moved to Farmville and this became known as Farmville Methodist Church. Somehow the idea did not appeal to some, so the ones left at Wesley decided to build a new church, since the old one was so dilapidated. In 1943 a building committee was appointed to superintend this. These were: J. E. Hardy, C. A. Fox, H. L. Hardy,
W. O. Mathis, and S. B. Ellis. Mr. W. A. Henderson, our Sunday School Superintendent and also a local preacher who has served so well through the years, met with them.

Mr. Murray Upshaw gave the stone for the building, and, although he has given these to many other churches, this was the first. The stone has jewel tones and blends perfectly with the Art glass in the windows.

These windows are in memory of those who had loved and served this church, whom we have lost a while. They sleep in the church yard nearby.

It was dedicated while Rev. Ellis Brashear was pastor. The dedication took place on the Fifth Sunday in July. The sermon was delivered by Dr. Elam F. Dempsey, a grandson of Rev. Alam Green Dempsey, who preached the dedication sermon of the preceding church.

Rev. A. G. Dempsey's text was the Valley of the Dry Bones, and the church received a real revival. Scores were saved. His grandson Dr. E. F. Dempsey's text was "Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the World." A revival followed this and many souls were saved.

Dr. Dempsey was custodian of church records at this time and came back several times, the last time he was in great pain, but his interest in this church never failed. He gave us a spiritual uplift each time he came.

The members of the present church are scattered far and wide. The working members are not many but are determined to hold and cherish that which those dear people gave to us through sacrifice.

As we look back over the years and in memory see the long lines of
wagons loaded to the back and buggies all wending their way to the Church and Tabernacle in the valley, and hear again the call to souls by Rev. E. M. Stanton and the thundering voice of Rev. J. A. Sharp as he preached and prayed so earnestly, and still others as they labored to save souls, it is no wonder that classes of 30 and 40 were received in the church at one time.

These people, not only enjoyed these blessings, but accepted their responsibilities for there are still responsibilities. This is a condensed history of this church, but there were those who served this church whose lives were so richly lived that theirs would be a story in themselves. Thank God for these heroes and heroines.

My story is told and, though poorly told, it has been unbiased. This church is not only a memorial to those who have served and worshiped here, but will stand to call those who pass to the house of worship.

In conclusion, I must give the names of those who went to the ministry from this church, or formerly worshiped here: Rev. N. A. Parson, Rev. Frank Hayes, Rev. Jim Pendley, Rev. Rhea Jones of the Alabama Conference, Rev. Hoyt Henderson, whose boyhood life was spent here.

The little church book, together with facts furnished by Mrs. Beulah McEntyre Clements, were my help.

Historian,

Mae Bradley Fox, Great Granddaughter of Thomas Gannaway
A page from the church book November 24, 1877.

Financial Exhibit Wesley Chapel

Amount paid for Sunday School

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Building Church</td>
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Total Amount: $283.63

Number of Members: 170
Adults Baptized: 6
Number of Sunday School Pupils on roll: 61
Church seating capacity: 400
Value of church property: $1,000.00

B. J. Hope Secretary

Present Church Value: $5,000.00
Amount Assessed & will be paid, all purposes: $501.00
Amount for Orphan's Home: $77.35
Amount of miscellaneous items is at least: $100.00
Roll, not revised in a long time has 151.
Working Church Members about 40 or 50.