THIRTY YEARS

AT

WEST ROME UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

OCTOBER 7, 1951

SEPTEMBER 27, 1981
At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Rome District Board of Missions on June 15, 1951, it was decided to sponsor the buying of a lot for starting a new Methodist Church in the West Rome area.

On June 18, 1951, the transaction was completed to buy the property at the corner of Shorter Avenue and South Elm Street. This consisted of a 250-foot lot on Shorter Avenue and a ten-room frame building. Purchase price was $17,000.

The Reverend Forrest L. King, Pastor at Celanese Methodist Church (now St. Luke United Methodist Church) was appointed the first pastor. Reverend Joe Faulkner was secured as Assistant Pastor.

On September 19, 1951, a ten day revival was begun in a tent on the front lawn of the house. Rome ministers assisting in the services were Dr. Delma Hagood, Zach Hayes, P.H. Minter, M.S. Echols, John Minter and James Sanders. Seventy-seven persons attended the service the first night. The next day work was begun on renovating the house. Partitions were removed in the front to provide a sanctuary capable of seating 140 people. This left six rooms and two restrooms.

On the official opening day, October 7, 1951, 58 people joined the new church. The church was officially named West Rome Methodist Church.

The First Quarterly Conference for the church was held on November 18, 1951. The first Stewards elected at the Conference were: Frank Perry, D.J. Raiden, C.J. Raley, Sr., Perry Caldwell, M.S. Skelton, Ben Rainwater, S.H. Bridges, Horace Wiseman, Sr., and Nelson Camp. Trustees were: Lawrence Mills, Nelson Camp, Ben Rainwater, Burk Wingard, Henry Myers, and R.A. Blankenship.

By this time the Church School had an average attendance of 72 for the first three months. C.J. Raley, Sr. was Church School Superintendent and Miss Mary Rodgers was Secretary.

The Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized immediately after the church began. Mrs. M.S. Skelton served as its first president.

M.Y.F., Junior and Adult Fellowship groups were organized with Johnny Davis serving as first M.Y.F. president. Marvin Otts was elected as president of the adult group. At about this same time a Methodist Men's Club also organized.

The Official Board began its work by electing the following officers: Nelson Camp, chairman; Perry Caldwell, vice-chairman; D.J. Raiden, secretary, and Frank Perry, church treasurer.
In December, 1951, the Board voted to enlarge the worship area by taking in the front porch of the house.

The deadline for receiving charter members was set as January 6, 1952. By this date 125 persons had joined the church. A list of these and of all of the pastors to date are at the end of the history.

As the 1951-52 Conference Year ended, the church was nine months old and 157 persons had been received into membership. At this time an annex was added to the frame building, raising the estimated value to $25,000.

At the 1952 session of the North Georgia Conference, Rev. King was returned as pastor, with the Reverend Stephen C Smith appointed as assistant to succeed Joe Faulkner. The first anniversary observance was on Sunday, October 5, 1952.

During 1952-53 some 53 members were added to the church, bringing the total membership to over 200. Church School attendance was now over 100.

C. J. Reiley, Sr. was the first choir director and Mrs. Frank (Inez) Perry made the first robes for the choir.

In the summer of 1953 a three-bedroom brick house, located at 320 Brookwood Ave., was secured as a parsonage, from the Pitts family at a cost of $12,834. This now made it possible for West Rome to have a full-time pastor. The Reverend Hunter Bassett become the first full-time pastor.

In February, 1954, at a special meeting of the Quarterly Conference, the church was authorized to make application to the General Board of Missions for a loan of $20,000 for the purpose of constructing the first unit of the new church building, a chapel. A Building Committee with Frank Storey as chairman and Howard Touchstone, Frank Tondee, Ben Rainwater and Mrs. Henry Myers as members, was named. Glass, Montgomery and Turner were chosen as the architects.

Groundbreaking for the chapel was held on March 27, 1955. By this time 302 members had been received into the church and Church School attendance averaged 150. A Scout hut was in the process of being constructed for the use of a Boy Scout troop sponsored by the Men's Club.

The chapel was completed in the Spring of 1956, the first service being held in it on Easter Sunday, April 1. Youth Week was observed in August, with an attendance of around 50.

With the chapel now completed, the frame building was divided into rooms for twelve Church School classes. A record Church School attendance was noted in September of that year, with an average of 190. By the end of 1956 the membership of the church had reached 304 and the average attendance at Church School was 200.
In 1958 the church had its first every-member canvass and raised its budget to $18,500. The Woman's Society continued to grow and divided into four Circles. Church School had grown by this time to 17 classes and 49 members were added to the church.

In October, 1959, a Building Committee for an Educational Building Project was named. Members were: B. Frank Perry, Chairman; G.W. King, Jack Lynch, John Major and Frank Storey. Bobby J. Toles was selected as the architect and plans were drawn for a two-story brick veneer building with 20 classrooms. The building would be 40x125 feet and have a capacity of 450 in Church School. At the end of the Conference year $85,000 was borrowed to pay off the balance of the chapel indebtedness and to construct the new building.

Bids were received on July 29, 1960, and Bradfield, Inc. was the low bidder. Groundbreaking for the new building was held on August 14, following the morning worship service. Those participating were: W.A. Cofer, oldest member of the church; Frank Perry, Building Committee chairman; Perry Caldwell, Official Board chairman; Mrs. George E. White, Vice-president of the W.S.C.S.; Suzanne Mills, President of the M.Y.F.; Rev. R. Parks Segars, District Superintendent, and Rev. Bobby Berrier, pastor.

Church School was held for the first time in the new Educational Building on Easter Sunday, April 2, 1961. Open House was observed during the afternoon.

In March, 1962, the Lee Pass Property directly behind the church on South Elm St. was purchased for $9,000. A budget of $21,934 was approved for 1962-63. Later in this year the church received $2,000 from Methodist Expansion to help toward paying for the Pass property.

A "Fund Crusade" was held in March, 1964, led by Walter Hoover. Pledges amounting to $55,479 were made to the Building Fund, to extend for three years. Also during March the note for the property on South Elm St. was paid off. The budget for 1964-65 was approved at $32,130.

After homecoming in 1965 it was decided to have homecoming only every five years in the future. Since the church was so young there were very few ex-members to return and also only three or four ex-pastors to get back for the observance. It was felt that more interest would be shown if it were held only every five years.

During February through Easter, 1966, the membership was challenged with an "Experiment in Tithing", tied in with an attendance campaign. As of February, 1966, the church indebtedness was $49,300 on the chapel and educational building and $3,400 on the parsonage. During the first part of calendar year 1966 the membership stood at 487. The Church School consisted of 20 classes, with an enrollment of 377.
In the summer of 1966 the church offices and kitchen were moved from the old house on Shorter Avenue to the house on South Elm Street, in order that the old house could be torn down, it having developed too many problems to do any further repairs.

In November, 1966, plans were made to purchase a house at 6 Wilson Drive, Fair Oaks, to be used for the parsonage. On January 19, 1967, the pastor and family moved into the new parsonage, which had been purchased at a cost of $25,500. By this time church membership stood at 518.

February 3-5, 1967, was set aside for the church's first Lay Witness Mission.

April 25, 1967, the Official Board voted to accept a quota of $4,988, to be paid over a 4 year period, to the North Georgia Methodist Funds Crusade.

In the Spring of this same year the old house on Shorter Avenue was torn down.

During April, 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church, so our church then became officially known as West Rome United Methodist Church.

In the Fall of 1968, the stained glass window was installed above the choir area in the chapel. The title of the window is "Come Unto Me" and the donor asked to remain anonymous.

By 1969 the budget had reached $37,179.

In the Spring of 1970 a committee was set up to investigate buying the Lacey property, which is adjacent to the present annex on South Elm Street. The asking price proved to be much higher than we could afford at the time.

March 20-22, 1970 were the dates for the second Lay Witness Mission.

In July, 1971, the W.S.C.S received permission to use the Church School rooms to conduct a tutorial service for children from Elm Street School who needed some special help. This was continued until 1972.

In mid-1971 central air-conditioning was installed in the parsonage.

It was decided at Easter, 1972, that a live crucifixion scene on the front lawn of the church would be a witness not only to our own members but to the community at large. Beginning with a portrayal inside the church of the Last Supper (with men of the church as the disciples and Jesus) on the Thursday night before Easter, it concluded with the Service of Darkness inside on Good Friday night, followed by the live
crucifixion scene on the lawn. Here again, members of the church portrayed Jesus and the thieves on the cross and the group at the foot of the cross. This, as hoped, was a special blessing to church members, people driving by on Shorter, and those in the neighborhood who came by to participate.

In February, 1973, we went back to the 10-minute assembly before Church School on a trial basis, the idea being to develop a closer feeling among the various class members, but this was discontinued at the end of the trial period, due to lack of attendance.

In 1973, also, a new organ and matching piano were purchased for the sanctuary, completely paid for through donations above and beyond regular pledges.

That same year the Lay Minister of Evangelism program was launched, with Barbara Davis as Lay Minister. Under her leadership church members became involved in many outreach programs, especially with patients at Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital.

In November, 1973, Rev. Warren Jones donated a large number of books to our church library.

Groundbreaking was held on May 26, 1974, for a fellowship hall. On September 22 of that same year a dedication service was held for the sanctuary and education building after the sanctuary was completely remodelled, including installation of carpet, painting, pews refinished, choir area enlarged and a better P.A. system was installed. Also in September the evening worship service time was changed from 7:30 to 7:00 p.m.

This same year we started sponsoring Dr. and Mrs. Marston Speight as missionaries to Tunisia, which continued for the next three years.

In September, 1975, we voted to do away with the annex building on South Elm St., because the church offices had long been moved into the educational building and the new fellowship hall did away with the need for it as a kitchen and dining area.

In March, 1976, we again attempted an assembly before Church School, but it was abandoned a few weeks later, again because of lack of attendance.

This same year the educational building was re-roofed, new choir robes were obtained through special pledges, and we gave away the annex building in order to get it moved when it proved impossible to sell it.

In May, 1977, a loan in the amount of $10,000 was obtained (separate from the ones on parsonage and fellowship hall) in order to install new air conditioning in the sanctuary and do some paving and other improvements on the parking area.
During this same year a special series of study named "The Way Of Life Seminar" was begun, in which members of the church wrote some special material to be taught in the adult church school classes (on a voluntary basis), for the following year. Barbara Davis, John Major, Carolyn Major, and David Terrell were some of the ones who developed material for this study. It led those who participated in it into a deeper understanding of the Christian life.

In 1973 the church began sponsoring one or more softball teams, who play in the Church League in the City of Rome.

February 1978 saw us have the highest total attendance on a Sunday to date (outside of Easter) when 345 people attended services that day.

The third Lay Witness Mission was held December 8, 9, 10, 1978.

In 1979 we had our first Pony Express program to secure pledges.

In September 1980, the Administrative Board voted to allow the Rome Lower School to use our facilities when their building suffered extensive damage by fire. They used our fellowship hall, kitchen and some classrooms until early December that year.

In the Fall of that same year a fund was started to obtain handbells for a Handbell Choir. Due to several sizable donations this choir will soon be a reality.

1981 also marks the time that we will issue the second pictorial directory.

At the time of this writing the church is making plans for the 30th anniversary, to be celebrated on Sunday, September 27, 1981. Membership at this time is 521.

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PASTORS OF WEST ROME UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1. Forrest L. King October, 1951 through June, 1953
   Joe Faulkner, Assistant October, 1951 through June, 1952
   Steven Smith, Assistant July, 1952 through June, 1953
2. Hunter Bassett July, 1953 through June, 1957
9. Marcus Martin July, 1980 to present time
CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

*Mrs. Frances Keith
Mr. & Mrs. A.D. Nixon
Mr. & Mrs. Emmett Johnson
Dan Nixon
Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Cofer
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Perry
Gerald Perry
Mr. & Mrs. D.J. Raiden
Mrs. Ben Bell
Mr. & Mrs. Perry Caldwell
Mr. & Mrs. George White
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy T. Lefler
Mr. & Mrs. W.E. Skelton
Louise Skelton
Mrs. Marie Hickman
Mrs. A.E. Ayers
Mrs. J.I. Studdard
*Mr. & *Mrs. Marvin Otts
*Miss Elizabeth Otts
Mr. & Mrs. James Cowart
Mrs. George Camp
Mr. & *Mrs. Nelson Camp
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Bailey
Mr. & Mrs. J.T. Kilgore
Burk Wingard
Mr. & Mrs. Dan R. Cook
Mr. & *Mrs. Henry Stewart
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Fields
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kirby
Mr. & Mrs. Ben Rainwater
Charles Rainwater
Joel Rainwater
Allen Rainwater
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Hall
Peyton Hall
Charles Hall, Jr.
Mrs. Gordon Aycock
Mr. & Mrs. S.H. Bridges
*Mr. & *Mrs. Henry McCool
*James McCool
Jerrell McCool
*Mrs. George Sheilnut
Mary Ann Shelnut

Mr. & Mrs. L.E. Mills
Mr. & *Mrs. C.J. Raley, Sr.
Mr. & Mrs. M.C. Russell
Linda Nixon
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Doss
Eugene Doss
*C.J. Raley, Jr.
Jane Nixon
John Payne
Nancy Ross
Mr. & Mrs. C.W. Moore
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Myers
Carolyn Skelton
Mrs. James Case
Mrs. H.T. Smith
Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Burk
Wayne Ross
Mr. & Mrs. Horace Wiseman, Sr.
Horace Wiseman, Jr.
Donna Wiseman
Mr. & Mrs. B.E. Drummond
Danny Drummond
*Mr. & *Mrs. Malcolm Skelton
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Ellison
Glenda Ellison
*Mrs. S.W. Tankersley
Mrs. M.G. Leonard

*Mr. & *Mrs. James Lowery
*Mr. & *Mrs. Howard Touchstone
Mrs. W.E. Jacobs
*Miss Mary Rodgers
*Paul Henson
*Miss Marion Payne
Mrs. M.D. Touchstone
*Mrs. E.L. Prewett
Hal Prewett
Mr. & Mrs. C.H. Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. R.P. Burdett
Mr. & Mrs. B.C. Holliday
*Mr. & *Mrs. John Davis
*Johnny Davis
Emily Davis
*Mr. & *Mrs. G.W. King

*Denotes still a member of West Rome UMC