

# Center Grove United Methodist Church

From Centennial Bulletin

Dated October 8, 1967

"To draw members of the church to a renewal of their vows and to win converts to Christ and the church, revivals were held with great urgency. The oldest members still alive tell of camp meetings held under brush arbors at Center Grove. Here Matthew Stallings, Jesse D. Cox, Adam Furr, and many others, brought their families and camped for the duration of the revival, which usually lasted two weeks. Many came from some distance to camp and attend the meetings.

"During the pastorate of the Rev. G. A. Oglesby, a meeting was in progress in which the pastor and members prayed that God would send something to stir the members and others of the neighborhood so they might have a good meeting. Although the revival was being held in the church, rather than an arbor—the camp meetings having been discontinued a decade earlier—the people of the church were greatly concerned and their prayers were fervent.

"On the night of August 3, 1886—date of the earthquake causing extensive damage in Charleston, S.C. and shaking Piedmont North Carolina—the church began to tremble ominously. Still living are eyewitnesses who tell of the frenzied pandemonium of the congregation, as pews and other articles in the church were scattered about in wild confusion. The church was a great hubbub of crying and praying. Driven to demented bewilderment, the congregation sought the quickest way out,

some through the doors and others through the opened windows, until the church was empty except for the pastor.

"Historian Thomas Franklin Shinn records that 147 joined the churches as a result of this experience. How many churches were included in this figure is unexplained, but we presume it meant either the churches of the circuit or all nearby churches.

## "MEMORABLE DATES AND EVENTS

"1920—A new church building was started, during the pastorate of the Rev. B. Wilson. A young boy named Jackson Klutz did the first work on the new building by cutting the first tree. The work was done primarily by the members of the church, who gathered with teams to cut and haul logs.

"The text for the first sermon, delivered in the new church by the Rev. B. Wilson, was: "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work." Nehemiah 4:6

"1922—The new church was completed, during the pastorate of the Reverend W. T. Albright.

"1939—Center Grove was taken from the Mount Pleasant Charge and placed on the Midland Charge, during the pastorate of the Rev. C. L. Heckerd. The five churches of the Mount Pleasant Charge had been: Center Grove, Cold Springs, St. Paul's, Mount Pleasant and Friendship. Churches of the new Mid-

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land were: Center Grove, Midland, St. Paul's and Pine Bluff.

"1945—The new church was dedicated on September 30, by Bishop Clare Purcell, of the Charlotte Area.

"1956—The present modern brick parsonage was begun in April, under the leadership of the Rev. B. T. Myers, and completed in October of the same year.

"1956—Center Grove was taken from the Midland Charge and became a station appointment. The first full time pastor was the Rev. R. J. Faulkner, who served the church from October, 1956, to September, 1958.

"1957—The new parsonage was dedicated at 12:00 Noon, on Sunday, June 9, with the Rev. Paul Townsend, Superintendent of the Salisbury District, presiding. Assisting in the dedication were the pastor and the Center Grove lay leader.

"1958—On February 24, a new Hammond electric organ was purchased by the sons of D.F. Widenhouse, R.F., W.J., C.A. and A.C. Widenhouse. In a Service of Dedication, led by the pastor, the Rev. R. J. Faulkner, during Morning Worship, the new organ was dedicated on Sunday, March 23. Also presented as a memorial at an earlier date to Mr. and Mrs. Dan F. Widenhouse was a modern hut, presented to the church by their sons.

"Other gifts to the church include the pulpit furniture, given by Mr. and Mrs. George Shinn, and the lighted cross given by Mrs. Julie Linker, as a memorial to her son, Paul, who was killed in service. The altar railing

and the altar ware were also gifts of friends of the church.

"Still preserved as a relic of the past is the pulpit used in the old church.

"Among the notable fruits resulting from the Christian witness of Center Grove through a century are the dedication of two of her spiritual sons to the work of the ministry, and one of her daughters in the foreign mission field. The Rev. William Black Shinn entered the Western North Carolina Conference in 1909. Including the years of his retirement, he spent 50 years as a Methodist preacher. The Rev. Brooks Jerome entered the Western North Carolina Conference in 1929. Upon his death in 1962, he had devoted 33 years to the work of the Methodist ministry. Mrs. William Bigham, formerly Martha Ann Eury is now working with her husband as a Methodist missionary in Estado de Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"It would be inappropriate to conclude this narrative without calling attention to the name of the late Thomas Franklin Shinn, who through the years concerned himself with discovering and recording the events without which the present account of the church he loved would have been impossible.

"In the neatly kept cemetery adjacent to the church are buried the founders and leaders of Center Grove, among them George C. Shinn, for whom the Community was named. Their nobility of life and their Christian devotion continue in the lives of those whom they cherished. God grant that the spirit which lent to their lives the enchantment of eternal things may never perish from our midst."