



Ashland Place

United Methodist Church 1942-2017

75th Anniversary Notes...

One of our objectives for this anniversary year is to inform the membership of our heritage as a church. To that end, Miss Katharine Hope, who was a long-time faithful and active member, gave me permission to share through the 50th anniversary column excerpts from the church history that she was compiling.



Dr. R. Lawson Bryan and Miss Katharine Hope at the Ashland Place 50th Anniversary Celebration

For decades, Miss Hope gathered from various sources the information that she organized into a draft of a written history. We are most fortunate that this beloved teacher of English and literature used her expertise to serve through this effort. She was truly on a scavenger hunt involving digging through files of minutes, letters, clippings and such, and interviewing many people. From her introductory paragraphs:

"A noble church structure may be a biography of a people and their relationship to their God. Standing on the corner of Wisteria Avenue and Old Shell Road is a veritable monument to the sovereignty of God and the Gospel of Christ. Its first name, Ashland Place Chapel, was appropriate, for it designated its geographical location and revealed its purpose.

Because it was to be an auxiliary place of worship and prayer for the Saint Francis Street Methodist Church, it was a chapel. However, as the years passed, it grew into full maturity and assumed all the responsibilities of a church; so the name was changed to the Ashland Place Methodist Church. In 1968, with the unification of the Methodist and the United Brethren Churches, it, along with other Methodist Churches, added "United" to its name. Finally, it had become the Ashland Place United Methodist Church.

Because the city of Mobile was beginning its building trek westward and the Saint Francis Street Methodist Church was situated in the heart of downtown which was becoming more and more remote from the residential region, Dr. George Stanley Frazer, the pastor, and some members felt it necessary for the Saint Francis Street Church to have a chapel further out where devotional and youth meetings could be held."



Dr. George Stanley Frazer

"Under the chairmanship of Mr. S.W. Bell, the Board of Stewards of the Saint Francis Street Church discussed this matter at some length. Some approved the plan, while others staunchly disapproved, feeling it might divide and weaken the Saint Francis Street Church. However, a motion was finally made and passed that a committee of three be appointed to investigate a suitable location for a chapel. This committee consisted of Mr. Sheldon H. Hendrix, Mr. F. P. Ellis, and Mr. Douglas Kennedy.

"On Wednesday, June 2, 1937 at 6:30 p.m., a meeting was called at the Saint Francis Street Church in order for the committee to make a report on its findings to the minister in time to allow him to make an announcement at the morning service on Sunday, June 6, 1937."



Saint Francis Street Church



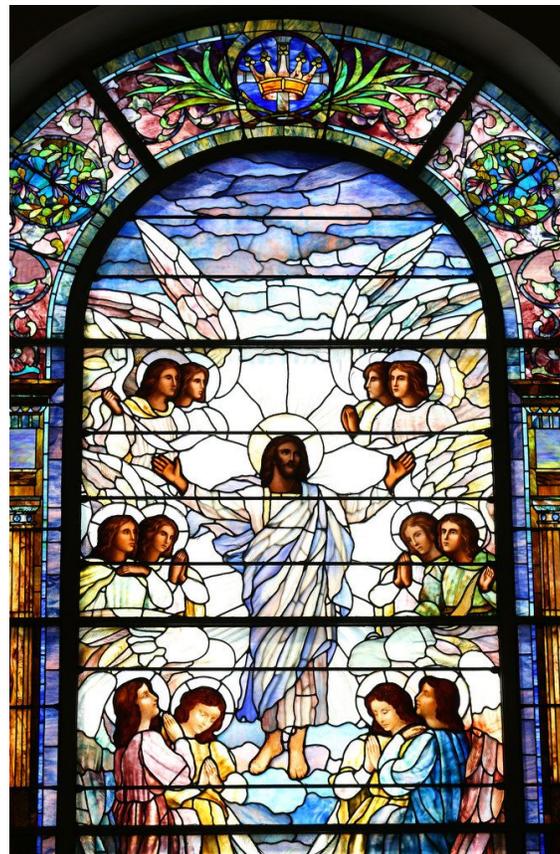
The Cornerstone of Saint Francis Street Church



The Chancel of Saint Francis Street Church



"Jesus and the Little Children" Stained Glass of Saint Francis Street Church



"The Ascension" Stained Glass of Saint Francis Street Church

"On March 29, 1939, the Quarterly Conference of the Saint Francis Street Church adopted resolutions

authorizing the purchase of the property on Old Shell Road and Wisteria Avenue. As attorney for the church, Mr. Alvin McConnell examined the abstract of title to the property and rendered an opinion thereon in writing to the church. By deed, dated April 7, 1939, and recorded in Deed Book 283, at page 387, Mrs. Gertrude Parker, owner of the property, sold it to the Church."

According to Miss Hope, a Planning and Building Committee appointed in 1939 by the St. Francis Street Church Board, reported the purpose of the proposed chapel as,

"It is to serve as a 'feeder' and arm of support for the Saint Francis Street Church and not in any sense separate from its general organization.

The program planned for the new center as stated by this same committee was also recorded in this report:

1. Adequate quarters for three or four children's classes in the Sunday school, especially for small children. We do not want to take away any from our school on Saint Francis Street. This is a plan for increase.

2. A social hall where week-night programs for young people will be held under the direction of a capable director or superintendent. Wholesome pictures will be used.

3. Vesper services at 5:30 or 6:30 p.m. on Sunday."

Miss Hope's detail gives us an appreciation of the long hours of deliberation, the months of negotiation, the dedication involved as real people, many whose names we regularly seem memorialized around this church, set about the tasks involved in expanding their ministry. As we prepare for the 75th anniversary celebration, let us recall their similar service which has preceded ours.

This church could be considered a mobile pioneer because it was built as the first church established in the move of churches to the suburban area of the city. Indeed, it was erected at the end of the trolley line.

Here's a clue for the next installment of Anniversary Notes: What does recycling have to do with the founding of Ashland Place?

Jane Finley
Memorial Chairman

There's a place for you!

A core group of interested members is working to develop the programs and events of the anniversary year. Your talents and prayers are needed. Please join in and take a role! [Contact Jane Finley, Memorial Chairman](#) or call the church office at 478-6356. Enjoy the fellowship, spiritual enrichment, and **fun** of being involved.

[Contact Jane Finley](#)

