



# Ashland Place

United Methodist Church 1942-2017

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## *75th Anniversary Notes*

What began as Ashland Place Chapel, with the laying of the cornerstone New Year's Eve, 1939, has become not only a vital church, but also a complex of buildings birthed by the Chapel and crawling out onto surrounding land.

The sanctuary building itself has been altered over the years as the needs dictated. Originally, the basement was divided into Sunday School rooms for children. Adults met in the Sanctuary for Bible study. Before the church had a parsonage, the minister lived in the basement. But that's a tale for another installment of these *Notes*.

When the minister moved out, the space in the basement was opened up somewhat. Years later the partitions were removed, the brick columns replaced with steel columns, and a small brick platform was built at the west end. There were closets installed for choir robes and music supplies. The basement served for many years as the fellowship hall. Meetings, classes, choir practice, MYF, receptions, WSCS (now United Methodist Women) meetings and the annual bazaar, and dinners were held in that space. There are fond memories of the annual talent show sponsored by the youth, using the small brick platform that held a piano for a stage.

Several years after the church became a separate charge, the need for more adequate Sunday School facilities was recognized, as the basement was not large enough or pleasant enough for the growing program. L.W. Brown, long-time church leader, is quoted by Katharine Hope. In the words of L.W. Brown,

*"...A very interesting series of meetings was held in the basement of the church...The discussions were long, involved, and time consuming. Some would start early and last late. The record was a meeting called to order at 7:30 in the evening and adjourned at 2:30 in the morning. The questions to be resolved were how could so few take on such a debt, and what guarantee was there that it could be paid. The Ashland Place Church has always had a somewhat transient membership, partly because of its attraction to new people by its friendliness. Many of these were with companies or organizations that moved people about. A good number of those individuals who were in the famous long meeting later moved from Mobile. The very thing that enabled the church to determine that night to build a Sunday School building and to develop a long range plan was the confidence recognized that we were on the move. Finally, agreement came, and this does not mean that there was open disagreement but that there was not consensus because of the fears of failure. Many times we feared, for this was a big expenditure with little in the bank but faith."*

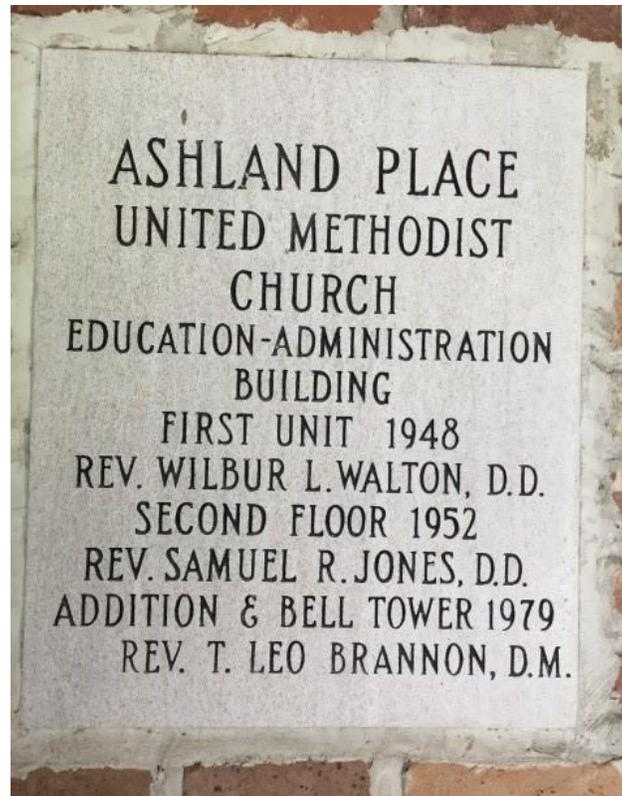
In planning, it was desired that the new building be connected eventually to the Sanctuary with access through a belfry. However, according to Mr. Brown, "it was decided that the first unit would be what is now the first floor of the children's building, to house classrooms for small children, the pastor's study, and the church office. The church office and study had been in the vestibule. The office requirements were limited and part time, but because the church always had 'full time' pastors (often times day and night), this arrangement was intolerable."

Thus, the first floor of a new education building was built during 1947-48. Mr. Brown continues his narrative about the building of the second floor in 1952:

"Thought and discussion revealed the need for more Sunday School space. Thus it was imperative that we build rather than repair the roof." The first floor roof had been leaking and would have required large expenditures for repair.

Mr. Brown continues, "Cost cutting techniques were applied and some changes to the original plans were

made. An architectural adjustment was made after meetings with a contractor. Precast stone was not used except for the end windows. These changes were made acceptable to the building committee after an architectural review of the great cathedrals in Europe showed that architectural changes had been made as they were brought to completion over the years." Architect was L.E. Allen and contractor was H. V. Cohron, both church members.



Sunday School classes met in rooms on the second floor. They opened into two large assembly rooms, one in memory of Mrs. Kay Lord and the other in honor of two charter members, Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Hendrix. Each assembly room contained an altar and piano. The youth funded one of the altars that was built by Lawrence Cater, son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. S.H. Hendrix. The WSCS gave the other altar. These altars have been moved from place to place within the church complex over the years.

In 1974, one of the upstairs education building rooms was converted for a choir room.

Originally, the church and educational building were heated with gas and cooled by fans. Sanctuary side windows were opened for cross ventilation during services. Ladies kept hand-held fans in motion for their comfort. In a series of meeting in the spring of 1955, the finance committee, represented by Herron Lord and George Hardesty, suggested that the 1955 Easter offering be used for air conditioning the sanctuary and replacing the pews. Estimate of cost was \$6,000. Eventually, on May 1, 1955, the charge conference approved.

When the church purchased the house next door on Wisteria Avenue for \$18,600 in 1975, youth programs moved from the education building into the house, making more space for children's classes and activities, including nursery space and space for Mothers' Day Out, which had started in 1971 under Chee Chee Waddle Street.

The next major building project was completed in 1979. The details of that effort will be related in a future installment of these *Notes*. Meanwhile, it seems timely, given the dangerously active hurricane season, to report the church's experience with Hurricane Frederic, which hit Mobile in September, 1979.

Fortunately, the original notes made by L.W. and Mary Brown are still available:



**L. W. & Mary Brown**

*"Wednesday evening September 13, 1979, Hurricane Frederic (category 3) came out of the Gulf and hit Mobile and surrounding areas. Trees were blown down and extensive damage was done to buildings in the area. Early Thursday after assessing the damage to their own property, many members of Ashland Place church hurried to the church to see what damage had been done there. They were gratified to find there was no evidence of serious damage at that time.*

*The following Sunday services were held as usual (but with no power) and the congregation gathered to share experiences and express their thanks over having their lives spared. The spirit of willingness to help each other and members of the community was demonstrated.*

*During the aftermath of the storm the church provided an important service to the community. The 'Gray House' (another property on Wisteria that had been acquired by the church) was used as a dormitory for some who had come from other communities to help with the cleanup. A member of the church served as the committee to distribute funds furnished by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Under the leadership of Dr. Leo Brannon, pastor, a counselling service was set up using local specialists who met with any persons in the community who needed their skill and services in dealing with problems that developed from the stress of experiences during and following the hurricane.*

*Mr. W. C. Gray, chairman of the House and Grounds Committee at that time, in making more extensive examinations of the building found structural damage to the sanctuary as a result of the wind pressure during the storm. A committee was appointed with Mr. Walter Underwood, chairman, to study the problem and make recommendations to correct it. Because of the Gothic type construction of the building, according to the experts consulted, corrective repairs would have required enormous structures on the outside on either side of the sanctuary. Since the congregation did not want to make such a drastic change to the appearance of the building, it was decided to reinforce the building by the use of cables inside the building. Of course there was concern that the cables would detract from the appearance of the sanctuary but there were no alternatives. It was brought out that similar cables can be seen in many of the old churches and chapels in Europe and were totally in keeping with the architecture of Ashland Place Church.*

*At that time, it was also discovered that the lovely stained glass windows needed to be re-leaded and strengthened. There was also the need to install plexi-glass covers to protect the windows. A special request was made for funds and this project was completed in 1985."*

Although it is unfortunate that all photos taken inside the Sanctuary since 1979 include the cables, at least there is some comfort in that the storms since then have not harmed the church or the beautiful windows. May that give the membership some peace in this season of record-breaking hurricanes. Let us pray that God, the cables, and the plexi-glass will sustain the Sanctuary for our worship of God for years to come.

Jane Finley  
Memorial Chairman

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## *Next Committee Meeting:*

The APUMC anniversary group will meet Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 11:45 a.m.

Please plan to attend this important meeting. We will be just a month away from our celebration date with lots to do.

Anyone not already in the group but wanting to join the group should be welcome! If you're planning to attend

please email Jane by Tuesday morning, September 12 so she can have a count for lunch.

[Click here to let Jane know you're coming](#)

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## 'Good As Gold' Cookbook Submissions:

**This week is last call for you to have your recipe(s) included in the new cookbook commemorating the anniversary.**

As part of the 75th anniversary celebration, the committee discussed doing a cookbook, as we did for the 50th. What was produced then, *Good as Gold*, has been extremely popular and is still sought after, though it has been out of print for 25 years.

So - a cookbook committee of volunteers began meeting and looking at options. We are happy to report that we will reprint *Good as Gold*, but with the addition of a section of recipes in commemoration of our 75th year. Time for production before Christmas is short, so we are putting out the word – especially if you were too young to submit a recipe in 1992 or you have joined the church since then and want to have one or more recipes included, **please send them immediately to Cammie Singleton's email address: [mattandcammie@att.net](mailto:mattandcammie@att.net) no later than September 10.**



We realize that this is short notice. It has taken a while to discover that the *Good as Gold* publisher has the archive and can convert it to digital format, with additions. Please help us with this project by submitting recipes and ordering books. They will be very special gifts. We are hopeful of collecting 75 recipes that reflect today's cooking and ingredient trends. So send them on! Be sure to cite the source if the recipe is not original with you or if you haven't made any changes to it. Of course, your own is preferred. Changes make it yours.

Watch for opportunities to pre-order soon.

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## Invitation:

Become a "friend" of the 75th anniversary on our Facebook page. In Facebook, search for the group "75th Anniversary of Ashland Place United Methodist Church." Join the group and invite others into the group to help spread the word. You will not want to miss the discussion going on in the group! Join and share your own APUMC experiences and anecdotes.

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