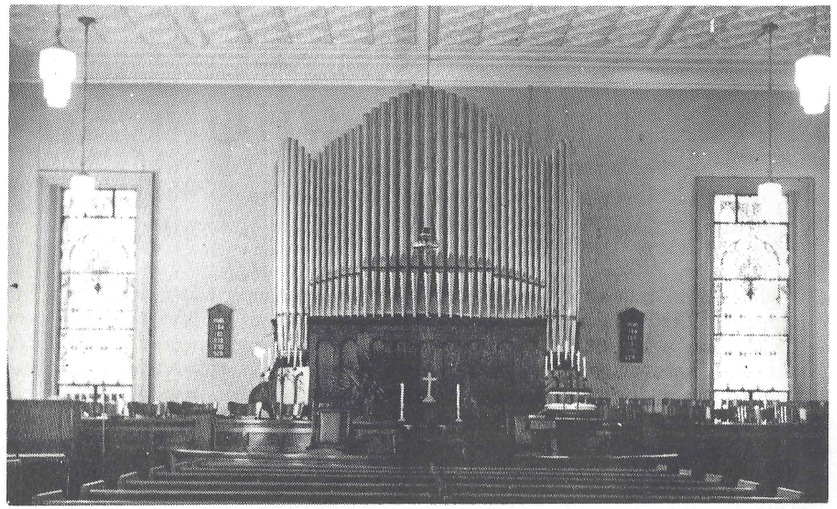
150 Years of Methodism

Leads the Way

HISTORY
of the
METHODIST CHURCH

RISING SUN, INDIANA



This year, 1965, the Rising Sun Methodist Church celebrates its 150th birthday. The members are proud of their spiritual heritage and have planned many activities to mark this occasion.

We dedicate this history to all those who have worked through the years to maintain the high spiritual faith of our Lord. It has been by and through their efforts and forcible faith that we will tell this, our story, today!

THE HISTORY COMMITTEE
Mrs. Effie North
Miss Anita Kay Swinford

HISTORY
of the
METHODIST CHURCH

(The following interesting article was written by Mrs. W. J. McConnell and read by her at the homecoming Oct. 18, 1928)

Methodism was an early and an important factor in the history of Rising Sun. Hardly was the town laid out before Methodism was planned within her borders.

In an article written by L. M. Jones, a former pastor, we learn that in the year 1815, more than a century ago, one year after the town was laid out, the Rev. John Strange preached the first Methodist sermon ever heard in Rising Sun. He was then in charge of the Lawrenceburg circuit, which included three counties and extended down the river far below Rising Sun. It is stated that a Mrs. DeCoursey, who was the first Methodist to move to the new town, and Mrs. Elizabeth Craft walked to a point 12 miles down the river to hear the Rev. Mr. Strang preach and to invite him to preach in Rising Sun. He gladly accepted the invitation and on his next round came and preached on the bank of the river near the foot of Main Street. His pulpit was the trunk of a tree and the pews of his auditors were the tree tops left after cutting the logs for cabins.

It seems strange and a little out of place that the first house opened for preaching was a bar room, but this appears to have been the case. This room was owned by Caleb A. Craft, who had settled here and had opened a house of public entertainment. He was kindly disposed toward the religious public. This house stood near the building used by G. W. Keeney as a warehouse. It was still standing as late as 1910.

The first class was organized in 1816 by Rev. David Sharp, who succeeded Rev. John Strange as pastor. This first class was composed of the following persons: Elizabeth Craft, John Gordon, Nancy Gordon, Henry Hayman, Elizabeth Howlet, Jane Fulton, Azariah Oldman, Rachel Oldman and Elizabeth DeCoursey, with Azariah Oldham as class leader.

This class met for awhile in a log school house on the corner of High and Main Streets. In 1818, a lot was secured on which to build a church. The records show that this lot was deeded by John James and Martha James, his wife, to the Rev. James Jones, Robert Hewitt, Moses Tapley, James Jones, Sr., Azariah Oldham, Gilbert Hall and John Worrell, trustees, and dated

September 1, 1819; consideration $100. This is the lot upon which our church now stands. This church was completed in 1821. It was a small one story brick building 36 by 40 feet.

God blessed and prospered this little group of pioneer Methodists so that the building was entirely too small to accommodate the growing congregation. In 1837, this building was razed and the next year a larger one took its place. I am informed that this second church building looked very much like our court house.

The records show that in 1842 the society decided to put an addition to the front of the church, said addition supported by columns upon which was built the cupola. The audience room was six or eight feet above the ground and the stairways leading to the audience room were placed in front and under the addition leaving the auditorium the full size of the original building. There were two front doors and a stairway leading to each. The basement of the church extended about two feet below the surface of the ground, in which were two classrooms and one larger room used for prayer meetings.

In 1843, a petition from the Rising Sun society was presented to the quarterly conference at Quercus Grove asking the presiding elder, Calvin W. Ruter, to detach Rising Sun from the circuit and make it a station. The petition was granted and Rising Sun became a station with the Rev. John Sullivan first pastor. It is not known what points or territory were included in the Rising Sun circuit at that time. It is said that John W. Jones attended the annual conference in 1843 and made a pledge with conference to the effect that no preacher should ever be permitted to leave Rising Sun station without his salary being paid in full. I believe this pledge has never been broken. In the same year the board passed the following resolution: "Resolved, that a collection be taken from the congregation every Sabbath morning as long as the treasury is in need of funds." It may be added that, as this order has never been repealed, and the practice is still followed, it is to be inferred that the treasury is still short.

At this meeting, the board appointed John Hamilton to purchase a bell for the church and J. L. Morgan to superintend the building of the cupola in which to place the bell. This bell became cracked so that it was almost useless and a sharp controversy arose between the buyer and seller as to how it occurred. The records do not inform us just how the matter was settled, but the board kept the bell, always contending that it was never struck by anything except the clapper.

The bell was used until 1850 at which time it was sold for $46.30 and a new one bought for $112.60. This bell now hangs in the belfry of the newly erected Methodist Church at Aberdeen, a gift from the trustees of this church, but many of the older generation of worshippers will never cease to miss its familiar silvery pealing calling them to the various services.

The seats in the second church were used in our Sunday School room until they were replaced by chairs purchased by our Epworth League for $300.00.

The lumber from the seats was used in the floor of the building

known as Clore's shop, and may still be serving in the same capacity in Mr. J. W. Whitlock's machine shop.

In 1851, it appears that there was a union or mass meeting held in the Methodist Church by all religious denominations of the town for the purpose of systemizing the Sunday School work. The town was divided into four districts; Main Street was the dividing line east and west, and Walnut Street made the division north and south. Each denomination appointed a canvassing committee and each took a section to canvass during the first week of each month and reported to the monthly union meeting the number of children attending Sunday School, the number not attending and the number promising to attend. An agreement was entered into to the efect that no effort should be made to promote the interest of one school over that of another. This arrangement seemed to have increased the attendance slightly, but judging from the records kept, the plan was of short duration.

In 1855 the sisters took things in hand, got up a strawberry supper, cleared $52.76 and applied the money to white washing and painting the church. I am moved to say that they continue to show this same ability in surmounting financial difficulties.

The color line seems to have been drawn in 1843. At that time the board passed a resolution seting apart a certain portion of the church for the seating of the colored attendants and appointed a committee to inform them of said action and see that they complied. Objections were also made to the using of black sacks or bags fastened on the end of a pole for taking up collections. A. C. Downey and J. W. Jones offered a resolution discarding the pole and black bags and substituting baskets in their places. Motion lost. I think the black bags continued in use within the memory of some who are in this room today.

In 1860 the question of building a new church began to be agitated and the following resolutions were offered by G. W. Craft:

First: Resolved that we very much need a new and larger church.

Second: Resolved that we must have a larger church.

Third: Resolved that we will have a new and larger church.

It carried unanimously. A subscription paper was started at this time and about $4000 subscribed, but the building project did not materialize until five years later.

In 1861 the young folks were granted the use of the church one night in each week for the purpose of practicing singing by note. Our church had its share of musical troubles when an effort was made to introduce the organ as an assistant to congregational singing. One of the presiding elders of this district, being very much opposed to the use of instrumental music in church, would announce when the organ was to be used, "We will now fiddle and dance this song."

In 1865, during the pastorate of Rev. Joseph Cotton, the present building was erected, though not fully completed until several years later. The building committee was composed of the following named persons who were also trustees: Theophilus Jones, Samuel Seward, Alesancer Downey, John H. Jones and G. W. Craft.

After this article was written, Mrs. McConnell's son, Robert, told her she had failed to put in the article that her Grandfather Van Ness had helped build the first floor of the church. He found this in a Masonic History.

Some letters written that year by Mrs. Sophia Downey to her sons Reed and Dan, who were students at Asbury College, are of great interest to Methodists and throw light on facts connected with the building of this church. Under date of January 19, 1865, she wrote:

"Brother Cotton has been holding meetings every morning and evening for more than a week. I have not been there. Last week the weather was very bad, and this week I have not been well enough to go. He is trying very hard to get a subscription for a new church, and I heard Dr. Sullivan say the other day that he would no doubt succeed. A few have promised $1000 apiece but they lack a good many thousands yet."

On March 9 of the same year she wrote: "There was a donation down to Brother Cotton's night before last, I have not heard with what success. A week ago he told me he only wanted $2500 more subscription to have enough to commence the new church. I have heard of him getting more since that. Bother Cotton says 'we will winter in the new church.'"

Three weeks later she wrote to her son, Reed: "We are expecting to embark in the building of our new church soon and are to have a meeting of the board of trustees tonight to take some preliminary steps, such as getting plans and estimates from an architect, and securing another house of worship while we are pulling down the old one."

On May 3rd Mrs. Downey wrote her son, Reed, again upon the momentous subject of the new church as follows:

"I suppose we shall go on with the building of our new church, though prices of everything are yet quite high." (Let it be remembered that this occurred at the close of the Civil War and war prices still obtained.)

"Brother Craft is an architect and has prepared plans and specifications. It will be 85 by 50 feet, the basement 12 and the auditorium 22 feet high, with classrooms at the two sides, two above and two below; also two others to be used for infant classes at the rear of the main basement room."

The next letter gives us the date of the actual commencement of the project. Under the date of June 8, Mrs. Downey wrote: "The workmen laid their ruthless hands on the old church Tuesday, the 6th, and it is gradually dissolving into its original elements. Oliver English is engaged on the job.

No further annals of the building were found until a letter describing the first service held in the new church. On Nov. 30, 1865, Mrs. Downey wrote to her son as follows:

"We had Bro. Beharrell with us this time during quarterly meeting and Bro. Lewis Sunday night. I went to church Saturday morning to be at the first service held in the new church. It was interesting, though there was only the usual turn-out for Saturday morning. Brother Cotton referred to the fact that Mrs. Craft was present. She had attended the opening of both

the old churches and had heard the first Methodist sermon, probably the first sermon of any kind, ever preached in Rising Sun. The trustees had requested that "Uncle Offy" start the first hymn sung in the church as he had sung the first hymns in both the other churches. I attended love feast next morning. There was work to be done yet which prevented the protracting of the meeting."

May 12, 1866 was the date fixed for dedicating and on May 6 Mrs. Downey wrote to her two sons about the coming event:

"We had no organ music at church today. In Sunday School William Monroe played two pieces and Mary French one. Philip Philips, a musical celebrity, is to be with us next Sunday, Dedication Day. We are to have no lessons in the Sunday School but spend the time singing and hearing speeches."

Alas for human expectations! The indebtedness could not be raised, so the dedication services were postponed, and not until the evening of June 20, 1872 were the trustees able to report the church out of dept.

The upper room was still unfinished. The amount of money expended so far (June 20, '72) was $14,067.31. In 1874 the upper room was plastered and the stairs built at a cost of $1,250. In 1879-80, during the pastorate of William Harrison, the church was completed and was dedicated April 11, 1880, the Rev. Lewis G. Adkinson preaching the sermon. The carpet pulpit fixtures and chandeliers were paid for by the ladies from their society funds at a cost of $525.

On Feb. 28, 1888, fire destroyed part of the roof. A slate roof was put on, the upper room was frescoed and some repairs were put on the lower room at a cost of $1,221.68 and of this amount the ladies paid $402.68 from their society.

During the pastorate of Rev. L. S. Knotts (1903) the metal ceiling was put on and some other repairs were made at a cost of $1,115.40.

This station had been served by forty-nine different pastors in its 107 years of church life. Of all the saints who laid the foundation of Methodism and who bravely bore the burden and heat of the day, not one but has gone to his eternal reward. A book might be written about their struggle to plant the cross of Jesus Christ in the wilderness and make straight His way for us, but time forbids any such digression.

One alone I must mention—Mr. Theophilus Jones, or "Uncle Offy," as he was familiarly called. He was the only member who had the honor and the pleasure of assisting in the building of all three of the churches mentioned. He took great delight in telling what excellent meetings they had in the first church. Even before the floor was laid they used the sleepers for seats and the preacher stood on a platform of rough boards. It was at these meeting that they had the sweetest communion with the Master. Cushioned pews could add little to the joy of such service.

There would be no point in my taking time to give you the history of our present day church, as it is already familiar to most of you, but there are few outstanding events I will mention.

One of the notable accomplishments of the church in later years

was the building of the parsonage which was done under the direction of Rev. Robert Brumblay and was largely due to his perseverence and enthusiasm. It has been said that this parsonage is one of the best in Southern Indiana. It was finished in 1906 and a rousing housewarming was given by the pastor and his good wife to the entire community.

While Rev. Fletcher was with us he instituted the first homecoming in 1909 and this was such a success it was repeated the next year and it was then voted to make it an annual affair.

Just why it was discontinued I cannot say.

During Rev. McDowell's pastorate in 1915, a pipe organ was purchased for the church and it is a lasting monument to his energy and determination. One half of the purchase price was donated by the Carnegie Foundation and the rest was subscribed by the membership.

Mrs. H. S. Stevenson was organist at the morning service for 18 years and was very faithful, very rarely being absent. Mrs. Blanche Dalrymple was the organist at the evening service.

During Rev. McDowell's pastorate the memorial windows were installed.

In August, during the severe thunder storm the church caught fire from a bolt of lightening and the cupola was destroyed. As this had been the third time that it has drawn fire from the clouds, the trustees decided to remove it and with its passing we lost the bell also.

"It stands in our midst, a time honored memorial to all that is noblest and best in the ranks who have kept the fires burning on the altar and held the torch aloft to light and cheer the pathway of humanity. It is ours to cherish so precious a heritage and to see to it that we never let its banner trail in in the dust."

Rev. J. T. Redmon remained here longer than any other minister. He was our pastor for nine years. He endeared himself to his flock by so many acts of kindness. He rejoiced with them and when they had sorrow he was there to help them either night or day.

Rev. L. S. N. Phillipp was called during World War II as chaplain and Dr. Geo. Murphy was with us for some months.

Rev. B. K. Johnson came in 1941-'43. Then He was called to the service of our country. Rev. Naftzger was here for about six months. Rev. L. N. Campbell was our pastor from 1943 to 1946. We commenced a program of redecorating at this time. Earl Taylor promised the chimes in memory of his mother, Mrs. Emma Taylor. But that year he was unable to get them, so they were installed later.

Rev. Roscoe LaHue came in 1947 and remained until June 1951. During his pastorate a new oil furnace was installed, also new floor covering, and asphalt tile masonite base and pulpit carpet.

New pews in the sanctuary were installed, a gift of Mrs. Lizzie Hall. At this time work was done on the parsonage and new carpets were laid in the living room and dining room.

Rev. L. K. Thompson began his pastorate with us in June, 1951. During his pastorate a chapel choir was organized. A junior choir

was organized by Mrs. Doris Pomerko and robes were obtained through funds of a chili supper. Miss Anita Swinford has been director of the Junior Choir since 1958.

In 1952, Rev. August Stork began his pastorate, and remained here until 1955. At this time Rev. John Hoadley became pastor. It was during Rev. Hoadley's pastorate that the sanctuary and Sunday School rooms were redecorated with money left in the will of Earl Taylor, and with money donated by Mrs. Prudence Dugle.

Our present minister, Rev. Floyd Haislup, joined us in 1958. Many improvements have been made in the church in these recent years and the church continues to grow both in membership and spiritually.

In October, 1964, Rev. Haislup went to South America for five weeks preaching and teaching the gospel. We were priveleged to have a former pastor, Rev. J. T. Redmon, now of New Orleans, La., visit with us and conduct services for one week during Rev. Haislup's absence.

The youth of the church have always had an important role. The Epworth League was active for many years and later branched into our present Methodist Youth Fellowship. The M.Y.F. is active in church service and programs throughout the year, but their most outstanding event is the annual Easter Sunrise Service. In recent years, these young people have served breakfast following the Sunrise Service.

Other active organizations of the church are the Women's Society of Christian Service and the Methodist Men. Enough cannot be said for their loyalty and devotion to the church program.

Mrs. Franklin Lummer has served as organist for 16 years. She is accompanist for both choirs and has served the church faithfully with her outstanding musical abilities. Mrs. Carl Searcy was pianist for the Sunday School for many years and retired only recently because of ill health. Mrs. Donald Adams is the present pianist.

Leroy Guard is presently Superintendent of the Sunday School with Gene Elliott as assistant and Mrs. John Stearns as secretary. There are 11 classes engaged in active study each Sunday. The present church membership is 317.

"Some of us do sow while others reap, but there is yet another group which gleans only to receive that which he has neither sown nor reaped, but which has fallen from the hands of others who have traveled this way before him."

Gifts

Following are a number of gifts and the greater facilities of the present church. Space does not permit the listing of all gifts presented, but by listing a few we will better bring a cross-section of the spirit by wrich our church has become a great institution for Christ and His Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Clay Miller, in 1938, the parsonage on North High Street; also a gift of $2500 for upkeep.

Mr. Oscar Jones—$500 bond (still drawing interest).

Mr. Ben Scranton—$10,000 in bonds, drawing interest.

Mr. and Mrs. George W. Elliott changed the chancel arrangement in 1912.

Martin L. Harris had the hardwood floor in the Sunday School room installed during Rev. Redmon's pastorate.

Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Reed gave light fixtures and the picture of Christ in the upstairs vestibule.

Choir chairs were given by Miss Ellen Stewart.

The entrance door downstairs was a gift from Mrs. Cynthia Loring. It was refinished recently by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lotton.

The Philathea Class gave French door on the right in the entrance downstairs; Mrs. Nettie McConnell's class, the door on the left.

Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Baxter gave the bell used at the present time; also the plate glass in the doors downstairs.

Chimes were installed by Earl Taylor, in memory of his mother, Mrs. Emma Taylor.

The Sanctuary Light was presented by Miss Anna Woods on Palm Sunday, April 10, 1938, in memory of her mother, Ella Cofield Woods.

Altar cross and candelabra were presented by Mr. and Mrs. Wilford Detmer in memory of his mother, Rose Monroe Detmer, and her sister, Mrs. Irma Spellbring.

Four offering plates were given by the Philathea Class in memory of Mrs. Emma Clark; by the families of Sophia Sherlock Scalf, John A. Barricklow and Sylvia Sharp Beckman; and by Miss Anna F. Woods in memory of her mother, Ella Cofield Woods.

The Gleaners Class was instrumental in furnishing the kitchen.

The picture of Christ in the Sunday School room was given by the Methodist Men in 1960. The frame was made by Paul Searcy, Sr.

Roster of the Clergy

With the help of Mrs. L. K. Thompson we were able to get a complete list of appointments from the minutes of the Conference for Rising Sun, Indiana, from 1837 up to the present time. This was furnished from the Library of DePauw University.

Fernando Cortes Holliday—1837-1838
Samuel Trumbull Gillett—1839-1840
P. P. Guthrie—1839
Thomas Goodwin—1840
Amos Bussey—1841
George Stafford—1841
John W. Sullivan—1842
Silas Rawson—1842
Wm. M. Dailey—1843-1844
Thomas M. Eddy—1845
Hosier J. Durbin—1846-1847
Wm. C. Smith—1848
C. W. Ruter—1849
Wm. M. Fraley—1850
Alfred B. Nisbet—1851
John Wesley Locke—1852
Francis W. White—1853
Thomas G. Beharrell—1854
James Crawford—1855-1856
J. M. Caw—1857
John Strange Tevis—1858-1859
Sampson Tincher—1860-1861
John Gilmore Chaffee—1862
Giles Chapman Smith—1863
Joseph Cotton—1864-1865
Wm. Thomas Saunders—1866-1867
L. A. Adkinson—1868
W. W. Snyder—1869-1870
Wm. Grubbs—1871-1872
D. A. Robertson—1873-1874
J. F. McClain—1875-1877
Wm. Harrison—1877-1879
S. S. McMahan—1880-1881
R. R. Baldwin—1882-1883
Edw. A. Campbell—1884
G. P. Jenkins—1885-1886
Alonzo Murphy—1888
John Machlan—1889
J. F. O'Neal—1890-1892
L. N. Jones—1892-1894
R. W. Moore—1894-1896
B. F. Rawlins—1896-1898
R. A. Kemp—1898-1900
L. S. Knotts—1900-1905
R. Brumbley—1905-1907
J. E. Williams—1908
W. N. Fletcher—1908-1912
W. H. McDowell—1912-1916
Manson Baker—1916-1917
Thos. J. Hart—1918-1921
Herbert Broadwell—1921-1924
Samuel Reid—1924-1926
M. B. Buchanan—1926-1927
J. T. Redmon—1927-1936
E. A. Gillum—1936-1938
L. S. N. Phillipp—1939-1940
B. K. Johnson—1941-1943
L N. Campbell—1943-1946
R. O. LaHue—1947-1951
L. K. Thompson—1951-1952
August Stork—1952-1955
John Hoadley—1955-1958
Floyd Haislup—1958-