

# TRINITY CHURCH HISTORY

By Florence S. Brown  
Written in 1920

During the years before the war between the northern and the southern states, the church of Robeson Circuit called Bethesda was the only Methodist church between Lumberton, N. C. and Marion, S. C. Our great uncle, John W. Powell, whose sister had married our grandfather, James Martin Ashley, and whose mother, a lovely Virginia girl, missed her church, built the little family gathering place which we remember as Hopewell. Carriage and pair took young and old, but feeble could not attend. Little Hopewell was divided into four parts-white men and women, colored men and women, and the grand old pioneer Methodist preacher loved to raise a song and a shout from colored as well as white, and no white ever behaved better in church.

In fact, the only misbehavior which was reported to me was our dear old sainted mamy Fanny who got to the pulpit door with her new pink satin parasol still unfurled over her curly head before black mamy could catch her.

Robeson Circuit was all of Robeson County. A pastor and junior preacher with saddlebags - one side with books the other clothing - never rested as from ten to twenty preaching places kept them busy.

Ashbury, now on Rowland Circuit, was used for white at morning service and colored at three P.M. Yet the South is yet to be able to make the North see that we didn't beat and kick, or starve the most valuable property on earth. But goodbye old days--never shall we see them again.

In 1896 the members of Little Hopewell and of Corinth built much later but for the same purpose, decided that for the good of the work to combine and to build half way between-and we bought a lot from the late, sweet, patient, saint-Mrs. Mary Ivey. This lot now contains the depot of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway at the head of the Leesville Road. The railroad paid us then what was a generous price and our pastor, Rev. Erskine Pope, tried to buy from H. G. Byrd, A. C. Thompson, A. J. Floyd and others, but no one would sell, until the trustees of the parsonage, who had bought from Iona Street down to the high water mark of Pittman Mill Pond (afterward selling to P. B. Thompson and Averette Mitchell) gave permission to build the church on the parsonage lot.

Then the Aid Society bought a lot 50 feet wide and about 250 feet long just beyond the church from A. J. Floyd to assure no interference on that side - the town afterward taking the street. Our little church cost \$1,100.00. We had, I think, forty-nine members, with not wealth - not even what we old folks would call "good livers" - but we got it done, painted outside, organ, stove, lamps, carpet, pulpit and altar, and on the second Sunday in March, 1898, twenty-two years ago at three P.M. with about half the pews made, we gathered to "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." Uncle Archie Thompson, father of A. C. and P. B. Thompson, raised our tunes in good old style. "Everybody made a joyful noise unto the Lord". Announced from the pulpit- "Next Sunday, three P.M. Sunday School will be organized" and it was-with something like seventy-five pupils as quite a number of Baptist and Presbyterian young people came, too. One more month and our organ was in place, S.S. doing well, a missionary society formed of the whole Sunday School. The last payment on the organ was made by a cold drink stand at the next commencement of Ashpole Institute.

Now this, to show you that we were willing and anxious to do what our hands found to do. At that time we were quite a curiosity to our Baptist friends, who said that "I can't see to save my life why them Methodist think they ought to have a church here. Look what a big one we've already got." This is absolutely the truth, tho I'm sure I do not blame you for refusing to believe it. They were also sure that we would have a



special brand of punishment because we raised money by hard work and pleasure in our own way.

In 1901 after thought, prayer, work, consultation, we thought we could do better work organized and Mrs. Dora Kimball Allred gathered us to the home of dear little grandma Harriett Ashley for a cottage prayer meeting, and we formed our little Ladies Aid with five cents a month dues. Two of our members then were over seventy-five, grandma Harriett Ashley and grandma Charity Ashley, and shortly after grandma Rose Pitman. These all died in the faith of their works that follow them.

The interest and love which we brought to our work caused us to love our neighbors and to be in charity and help real sisters. We had all kinds of meetings and work, but from the very first time promised each other that never would we gossip. If someone forgetful broke this rule, she was fined ten cents. The first thing we did to make money was an autograph quilt at five cents per name. It proved very popular as we announced a party to all helpers. We carried it through, too. Quilted all day--and a contest unknown in these days of high society. The quilt was measured off into divisions. Each young man could name his helper to thread his needle and to hold his candle, and the best hemming had a prize. The first game of baseball over yonder in front of us hadn't a patch of enthusiasm compared to this. When the half of the hemming was up, the lady judges said No. 9 has the prize, and you could have heard a pin drop while Mr. G. W. Whitehead, depot agent and secretary of our S.S. made the presentation speech to Mr. Drum Floyd, and when uncovered the old grey mule on four little tin wheels bobbed his head as Drum pulled the string along the mantle. What a row! The quilt was sold to the highest bidder--Mr. Francis C. Jones--who presented it to his sweetheart, and Sister Maude Jones will show it to you any day. The first money spent was to buy a white silk burial robe for a dear, good mother, Mrs. Lucy Kelley Ashley, fond, proud mother of Wade and Berry Ashley. Tho not a member, she helped all she could, and with her husband, John Ashley, never found anything too hard to do. John was a splendid singer, and to see him come into S.S. with his song book under his arm, a smile to everybody, followed by a clean set of rosey faced boys--Wade, Berry, Andrew, Ross, and knowing two girl babies were at home. How I wondered how it could be done. Suddenly the awful news came that for John and Andrew there was no hope and in a few days they were laid in the family graveyard, and mother Lucy brought into the world another beautiful girl baby. To do the best to save her, she was taken to her mother's old home in Bladen, but in a few days mother and babe followed father and brother. She had left a request to all of us - "Send my children to the orphanage. God be thanked, it is the most blessed thought of my life that my children can be trained by Christian Methodists". When she looks down from above and sees three sons all sober, hardworking, doing their share for home and country - two daughters, cultured, refined, educated - what do you suppose she thinks?

We had a pump put down in the yard where you saw the lovely wisteria blooming. That vine is a daughter of mine that was given to me thirty years ago by Mrs. McLeod of Lumberton, N. C. - a little bride so proud of her pretty little home, built and furnished, even to the cook. I remember that admiring Mrs. McLeod's yard she had said, "Well now, Honey, George



**This picture was taken from the November 1901 "Raleigh Christian Advocate." This group of young orphans made their home at the Methodist Orphanage located in Raleigh, N.C. Among these children were O'Berry Ashley, third row up, third from the left, and brother Wade Ashley, fourth boy on same row. Later their brother Ross and sisters Iola and Maude joined them. Parents of these five children were John Edmond Ashley and Lucy Jane Kelly who died of typhoid fever in 1901.**

says you and Johnny Brown are going to marry some day. Come back and I'll give you some of all I've got." None remains of the many shrubs she gave me but this.

The water of the pump did not agree with the next preacher, and if I had plenty of money to buy paper, I could write a library on what we did to please freaks. - but to resume.

When Prof. Sam Cole, principal of our school, died suddenly in Carthage, we were able to give his children the money to go to him, and when his wife returned to pack her furniture and gave to us a heartfelt of thanks praying God's eternal love for us as truly Christians, for the good book says to visit the widow and the helpless and the stranger. She felt that nowhere would there be found such friends.

We bought the street between the church and F. C. Jones yard. We paid for the blinds, the flues, the heater, the carpet. The children of the S.S. under our direction collected \$50.00 in one week for the church bell. The fence of the parsonage yard and bedroom furniture for two rooms came from us. This was the old building, and in the one over there so much more comfortable, we spent \$250.00 - every cent we had in the bank.

In 1903 we organized a Home Missionary Society and in 1905 a Foreign and never felt it any more hardship to pay dues to all three. One of our members said, "God has given me more than I ever expected to have since I trusted him for it, he has it ready for me." As a Home Mission Society our gifts broadened to Vashto, to Brevard, to Scarritt School, to the salary of Miss McKinnon, to the pledge, to the old missionaries worn out in our service, to preacher's families in hard places, to help rebuild a church after a storm. We have tried to answer every call. One of the most interesting cases was the "Walking Pastor." Rockingham District Conference was held here and I heard the pastor of Newharrie Circuit make his report. Eleven churches, three of them fifteen miles away, no parsonage, rent to pay, wife and five children, and a young daughter an invalid, and his horse died the year before as he was walking to his appointments. I made his acquaintance. He was well educated, pleasant, cheerful and not a word of complaint. We wrote to Mrs. Wilkins of Welden, Supt. of Supplies, at the request of our pastor's wife, Mrs. C. W. Smith, asking to be allowed to help him. She was so horrified. She wrote him and also the Raleigh Advocate and in a month was commented on in the Nashville Advocate and in at less a half-dozen Methodist papers all over the southern states, and Walking Pastor fund grew to \$150.00 and the \$50.00 to make it two hundred was sent from a converted Catholic Mexican of Samoran.

I was scared half to death of the commotion I had caused. I was afraid his wife would murder me, but she and he both were grand Christians. I afterwards met her and she was my guest at a district meeting. The Aid Society of St. John's Church of Goldsboro gave him a black broadcloth suit and we gave him the hat to complete the outfit.

The first money sent to the Methodist Orphanage from Robeson County was \$5.00 we made from an Easter egg hunt in our society.

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## History of Trinity Methodist Church and the Ladies Aid Society

Written by Mrs. Florence S. Brown in 1920. Spelling and punctuation appears as it was in the original text.

## FLORENCE S. BROWN

In the 1920 history written by Florence Sanford Brown, she gives the reader a good description of early church life at Hopewell, Corinth, and the new wooden Trinity Church. This document is one of the most treasured possessions in the TUMC History Room.

Florence was the daughter of Rev. Jonathan Sanford who served the Robeson Circuit from 1886 - 1888 and again in 1893 - 1894. She was born in 1868. We have no knowledge of her early life but we do know she was the first wife of Dr. John Powell Brown. She and Dr. Brown had an adopted son, Harold Brown, who became a successful newspaper editor and lived in Mobile, Alabama.

A dedicated member of Hopewell Church and later Trinity, she was fifty-two years old when she wrote the church history in 1920. Florence died at the age of fifty-five in 1923 before the completion of the brick church.

From her writings we gather she was a devoted church worker who did not hesitate to "speak her mind" or come up with innovative ideas to raise money for the church. The following letter was written in 1892 at the age of twenty-four from Ashpole (Fairmont) to her good friend Miss Maude Pitman (Jones) in Leesville. She is trying to engage her friend in a money making project in order to buy new doors for the church.



1892

Dear Maude,

The arrangements are made for us to go Sunday so come over soon & lets get off before it's too hot - unless it looks like bad weather.

Say I've a new money making plan this morn. Have already consulted Mammy Hattie & Cat T. Ask Aunt Rose what she thinks & let me know by Sun. It is this. All who will help. Cook two or three pies a plate of biscuit & a dish of some kind of meat - ham, chicken, beef or - (or possum). Let us get H. Floyds store & sell lunches next Friday. Give a slice of pie two or meats & two buscuit for ten cents. We can get oil stoves enough to keep coffee hot & not have any plates to wash. Let them stand up to the counter. No cake or extra fancy things just fruit or tater pies. Then each one look after his own & take what is left home & eat it for supper. All would be clear but the coffee & sugar to go in it & if it's a good day I believe we can make several dollars. I'll ask John tonight what he thinks of the crowd being large enough to pay us for the trouble. It would be less trouble by a great deal than other things we have done.

Let me know what you think of it. We need those doors mighty bad, don't we? Ask Coz Os. if he doesn't think the men would like a good cheap lunch place.

How's the skirt?

Yrs with love  
F. S. B.



If you wish to learn your fate,  
Come to the hall as the clock strikes eight,  
A penny a piece you will have to pay,  
For the times you have seen Halloween day.



Town Hall,  
Eight to Eleurn  
October thirty-first,  
nineteen hundred and six.  
Young Ladies Aid Society,  
M. E. Church.

*Pictured at left is an invitation to a gathering put on by the Ladies Aid Society in 1906.*



## TRINITY'S HISTORY THROUGH THE YEARS 1917 - 1998

By 1917, during the pastorate of B. E. Stanfield, it became increasingly evident that a new church was needed and a building fund was begun. Plans were soon adopted, and building materials were put on the ground in 1923 during the pastorate of Rev. W. F. Traywick. The Building Committee consisted of J. H. Pitman, G. H. Floyd, J. M. Andrews, C. A. Floyd, A. S. Thompson, and G. H. Cole, Treasurer.

Raymond and Chester Andrews, who watched and helped along with brother Berry with the gathering of the building materials, recalled the following 1923 activities:

The lumber was sawed by the Jackson Brothers Lumber Company during the Christmas holidays. Our father, Marshall Andrews, furnished the trees and fell same on the property near the Thomas Floyd, Jr. resident on Marion Stage Road. The floors were cut two inches wide and air-dried--no knots. Marshall Andrews and Graddy H. Floyd, Sr. used mule and horse teams pulling scoops to dig the basement. The clay dirt was put where Fairmont School is now located. Mr. Joe Jones supervised the actual construction and Cooper and Son of Maxton, N. C. were the architects.

The cost of the church was \$30,000 and \$6,000 of this amount was borrowed. Most of the construction took place in 1924 with N. B. Johnson serving as pastor.

Rev. F. B. Peele served in the Fairmont Trinity Church at the close of the Robeson Circuit (1927-1930). His brother, W. W. Peele, was bishop of the Virginia/N.C. Conference.

The Fairmont Charge was established in 1931 and consisted of Trinity, Bethesda, and Olivet Churches. The charge was placed in the Wilmington District--J. W. Bradley, pastor, served these three churches.

Rev. J. E. Blalock (1935-38) reported in 1936 that the church debt had been liquidated, and a total of \$2,000 had been spent on improvements. Rev. Blalock died while serving Trinity and Rev. W. R. Dixon finished out his term.

Under Rev. F. B. Joyner (1939-42) a kitchen equipped with an electrical stove and a recreation room was completed in the basement of the church. The parsonage beside the church was also remodeled in 1939 (built and painted in 1899--cost \$570). The new church with a membership of 348 was dedicated by Bishop W. W. Peele on July 16, 1939.

Trinity Church having been a charge for 15 years, was made a station in 1946 with 325 active members and 65 inactive. Rev. Ben F. Boone (1943-47) was pastor at the time. The church remained a station for 29 years.



**GASTON DRAKE FLOYD**

The father and grandfather of many of our present day Floyds.



**JAMES MARSHALL  
ANDREWS**



**RAYMOND ANDREWS**

## A NEW BRICK PARSONAGE

During the pastorate of Rev. Daniel Lane (1948-51), a new brick parsonage for Trinity Methodist Church was dedicated by Bishop W. Walter Peele, Bishop of the Virginia/N.C. Conference (Nov. 1948). The modern home was built by Clyde C. Fennell at a cost of \$18,000. Robert Floyd was Chairman of the Building Committee with Glenn W. Bowers and W. Carlton Floyd serving on the committee. The Golden Anniversary of the church was also celebrated at this time, Nov. 14, 1948.

## THE EDUCATION BUILDING

Between 1948 and 1951, the church began to experience growing pains again, the goal being a new Education Building and renovation of the sanctuary - estimated cost \$135,000. The Beaufort Lumber Company was part of Fairmont as early as 1904 and brought a lot of members to our church. By April 1956, Rev. Charles H. Mercer (1952-56) reported the amount of \$37,719 in the building fund. In November of that same year, the new pastor, Rev. J.D. Autry (1956-58) reported a balance of \$50,000 in the fund and it was decided to begin construction. The Building Committee was composed of G.H. Floyd, Chairman, Mrs. Christine McDaniel, W. Carlton Floyd, and H.J. Rawls. W.B. Lennon, Sr. was appointed treasurer and was followed by Robert O. Floyd at his death. Holloway and Reeves of Raleigh were the architects, and the main contract was let to A.C. Carter of Whiteville, N.C.

In 1955 during the term of Pastor Charles Mercer (1952-56), Sunday School peaked with 360 members. Wade Ashley was superintendent of Sunday School. (1936-58). There were 428 members on the church roll.

Rev. M.W. Maness, a dedicated pastor, served for one year, 1958-59, and was replaced by Rev. Walter C. Feltman 1960-61. Rev. Feltman passed away January of 1998. He made his home near New Bern, N.C.

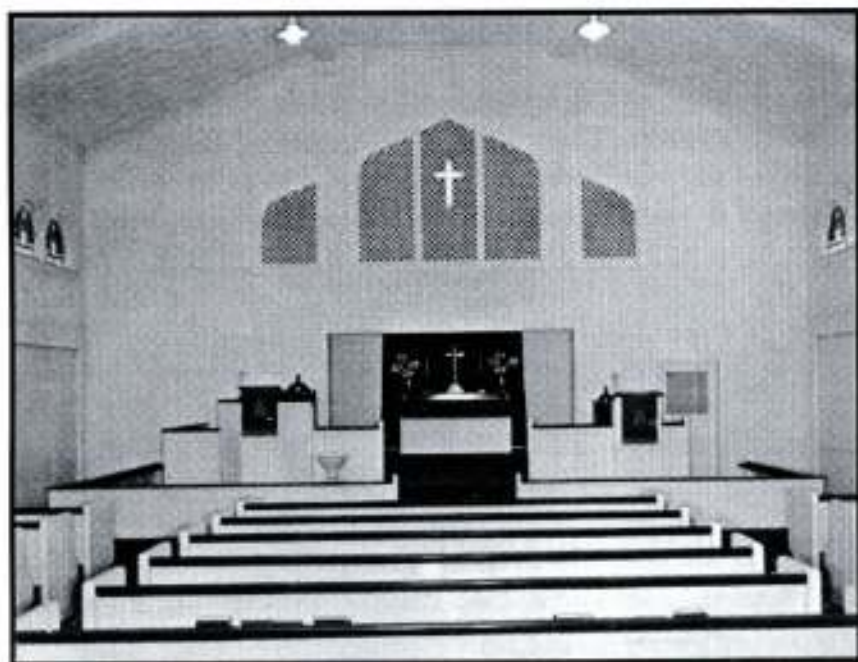


**Dedication of the new Education Building, October 13, 1963**

Pictured are left to right: H.J. Rawls, Mrs. Dan Floyd, G.H. Floyd, Wade Ashley (Supt. of Sunday School), Page Floyd (child) and Dr. Dan Floyd.

Rev. Paul C. Browning began his ministry at Trinity in 1961. The renovation of the sanctuary in 1962 was begun under the guidance of Rev. Browning with F.D. Nance and Wallace Floyd contracting most of the work. There were contributions of \$8,000 to the building fund and the church had a loan of \$19,000. The sanctuary was changed from a pulpit-centered chancel to a divided chancel and painted white; folding partitions were removed; new light fixtures were added; the choir and a new \$11,500 organ were moved to the balcony. A new heating unit and air conditioning were installed. Eighteen hundred dollars worth of gifts as memorials for the sanctuary were received. On August 25, 1962 Rebecca Alicia Rawls of Fairmont, N.C. and William A. Greene of Whiteville, N.C. were the first young couple to be married in the newly renovated sanctuary.

On October 13, 1963 Trinity Methodist Church celebrated the dedication of the new Education Building by Rev. Clyde S. Boggs, District Superintendent. Homecoming was also celebrated on that day and our pastor, Rev. Browning, welcomed former pastors, friends, and 450 church members. Rev. Charles H. Mercer, former pastor, gave the sermon.



*THE NEWLY RENOVATED  
SANCTUARY - 1962*

*TRINITY SANCTUARY  
RENOVATED  
(August 11, 1985)*





During the term of Rev. Ralph Epps (1964-70), the parsonage porch was renovated into a den, bedroom, and bath. At Homecoming, Nov. 27, 1966, two hundred and twenty people filled the sanctuary to hear Bishop Paul N. Garber's sermon. Rev. Epps became known as "Ole Faithful" while serving as chaplain of the Fairmont High School football team. In 1968 Trinity Church became Trinity United Methodist Church.

A well thought of pastor was Rev. Charles E. Owens (1971-1974). Rev. Owens became known as "Mr. Fix-It" for he was always happy to make small repairs on the church property. He now resides in Roxboro, N. C. Some of Trinity's men who also were and are talented with their hands: F.D. "Red" Nance, Wade F. McDaniel, L.I. Campbell, M.S. Huston, Robert Stuart, and Steve Floyd.

Rev. Robert M. Drew served as our minister from 1974-77. In 1975 TUMC became a charge once again and for nearly twenty-three years has remained so. Bishop Robert M. Blackburn gave the sermon for the May 22 1976 Homecoming. Clyde G. McCarver, D.S., and Rev. Chester Andrews took part in the service.

Our minister from 1977-1981 was Rev. Noah B. Hill. The Webster property next to the parsonage was purchased July, 1980. This afforded the church members more room for parking.

The pastorate of Rev. Robert F. Moore was from 1981 to 1987. During his term, the property of George L. Grantham Estate (corner of Iona and Mitchell Street) was acquired (March, 1985). This too extended the parking facilities. On August 11, 1985, Trinity's sanctuary was again in the process of renovation. Pews were removed underneath the balcony and walls were knocked out making room for the beautiful narthex we have today. The sanctuary was painted and pews refinished. The project was under the direction of the Board of Trustees, Robert F. Stuart, Chairman, H. J. Rawls, William A. Greene, and Rev. Moore, Pastor. Ronald M. Nye Construction, Inc. was the contractor. On the first Sunday back in the sanctuary, there were one hundred in attendance, September 8, 1985.

Other noteworthy events between 1981-87 were: The installation of the wheelchair lift in 1985 at the cost of \$6,200 which was a project of the United Methodist Men; the Sunday afternoon concert by the Burlington Boys Choir on March 8, 1987--203 attended; and a series of trips that were taken in the church van by Rev. and Mrs. Moore and interested women of the Trinity and Olivet Churches between 1983-1986. Their travels included The Passion Play in Shenandoah Valley, Va., Old Salem in Winston-Salem, N. C., Savannah, and Saint Simons Island, Ga.

During the ministry of Rev. James Harris (1987-92), the Lanness K. McKee and Company property was purchased in September of 1991. Restoration of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary became necessary. The work was done at the cost of \$44,000 by Shenandoah Stained Glass out of Shenandoah, Va. Steve Floyd oversaw the project. Homecoming was celebrated March 10, 1991--170 attended. Homecoming on March 15, 1992--146 attended. Linwood Floyd retired after serving for forty years as our Church Treasurer - 1992.

Rev. C. F. Grill served as pastor from 1992-94. Under his leadership, the church began the project Vision 2000 and the Shepherding Program (a community outreach program). On March 13, 1994 there were 95 in attendance for Homecoming.

Rev. Herman S. Winberry preached his first sermon in Trinity United Methodist Church on June 19, 1994. He continued the program Vision 2000. His relaxed and cheerful approach to his work was contagious. On March 26, 1995 TUMC celebrated the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary of Hopewell Methodist Episcopal Church South (1845-1995). The Bishop of the N. C. Conference, Carlton P. Minnick, Jr. preached the anniversary sermon. Rev. Ben Rouse, Superintendent of the Rockingham District, was also present. There were 212 in the congregation that day.

A young minister by the name of Troy Todd came to us in 1995. He preached his first sermon on July 2. During his year of service, participation and interest in the Youth Ministry of the church was encouraged. It became evident during this period that an ice machine would certainly be an asset with so many activities taking place in the Fellowship Hall. The Sunday Afternoon Circle adopted this as their project and in 1996 an ice machine was installed in the church kitchen. The circle gave this in memory of a faithful member, Nettie Ruth Floyd. Nettie Ruth Floyd had the distinction of being the first woman to have a seeing-eye dog in North Carolina.

The first woman pastor assigned to the church was Rev. Kimberly G. Pollock (1996-97). She was instrumental in re-energizing the evangelistic mission of the church. Under her leadership, prayer groups were organized, workshops were held on the new church discipline, and Vision 2000 was revitalized. Also increased participation in church leadership was encouraged.

The congregation welcomed Rev. Debra Watson in the summer of 1997. She found the church in the process of felling trees and concreting drive ways and parking areas behind the Fellowship Hall. It was not long before Rev. Watson's talents and enthusiasm for the continued learning of God's Word and the continuation of his works by the church community became evident. We are grateful for her ministry.

Mrs. Carolyn Wooten Malion organizes the prayer chain and has faithfully led the prayer groups for a number of years.

A firm foundation was laid for Trinity United Methodist Church one hundred years ago when there was a longing for a house of worship and the early families began to sing: "On Christ the solid rock I stand all else is sinking sand." Trinity continues to be a Christ centered church and He remains the center of every undertaking.

The congregation continues to seek ways to grow spiritually through pastoral presentations of God's Word and through personal study and meditation. We are ever reminded of God's unconditional love and His call for us to do our very best. It is our prayer that we, the church community, make it our mission to be faithful to that call, and work for unity at all levels of church life as we move onward "with the cross of Jesus going on before."



*The first Chrismon Tree was decorated in 1979. Many women in the church under the guidance of Martha Purcell Floyd and Mabel Provins made the 174 Christmons. For the past six years Dr. and Mrs. Sam Evans and children have donated a tree for the Christmas Services.*

*Sunday morning  
"Time With The Children".  
Storyteller - Mrs. Sheri Cureton  
(December 1995)*

