

## **The Story of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church** ...For it is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship..... – **John 4:22**

### **The Genesis**

Wesley Memorial shares in a unique Methodist heritage of **more than two hundred years**. Wilmington was one of the first American communities influenced by Methodist preaching. **George Whitfield**, friend of the Wesleys and an ardent missionary to the colonies, “read prayers and preached” just west of the Cape Fear, December 30, 1739. On October 18, 1747, he **arrived and preached in Wilmington** "hunting after sinners in North Carolina woods."

During a later visit, the mayor of Wilmington **implored him to stay and preach**, which he did on March 31, 1765. Governor William Tryon was present and commented on the excellence of his sermon. According to other journals, many Methodists resided around Wilmington and New Bern, but the reality is that neither Whitfield nor Francis Asbury, whose first visit was on March 19, 1785, was able to establish a permanent society. **Circuit riders were appointed** to Wilmington beginning in 1784, but the first society (or church) was formed ten years later by Jesse Jennett and William Meredith. This is **considered to be the founding of Grace Church** and represents the beginning of all organized Methodism in the area.

Wesley Memorial is the largest United Methodist Church in the Wilmington District with a membership exceeding 2000. The name Wesley Memorial was **not the original name** of the church. The organizing group met **December 6, 1914**, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. W. F. King and established the “**Winter Park Methodist Episcopal Church South,**” with 25 charter members.

The Rev. G. Milton Daniel became the **first pastor** of the new church, and arrangements were made to hold services in the Winter Park School until a church building could be erected. At the Quarterly Conference in **January of 1916**, a Building Committee was appointed and the **name was changed to Wesley Memorial**.

### **How We Grew**

There have been at least **five building programs** completed to meet the church’s growth. The first structure was completed in 1917, a \$4,000 sanctuary located on the **corner of Peachtree Avenue and 4th Street** (later named 46th Street) on property given by Mr. C.E. Hall.

In 1934-1938, under the pastoral leadership of Reverend O.L. Hathway, a \$11,500 **brick educational building** was joined to the sanctuary. This building consisted of three large classrooms and a pastor’s study on the first floor; a fellowship hall, and provisions for four classrooms and a kitchen on the second floor.

On **November 18, 1958**, ground was broken for the present sanctuary at a cost of \$135,000. John T. Maides was serving as pastor during this period. This structure of English gothic design **is in use today**.

The church has **owned several parsonages**. In 1940, a new six-room house was built adjacent to the church on College Road to replace the parsonage at 4305 Wrightsville Avenue. In 1961, a new parsonage was purchased on Oxford Road, leaving the old parsonage adjoining the church for needed classroom space. During the tenure of Rev. Vernon Tyson, an anonymous gift was made of a parsonage on Acacia Drive. In 1993, the home at 3325 Amber Drive was acquired. The Oxford Road parsonage was utilized as an associate’s parsonage until 1983 when it was sold.

The **educational wing** that houses the preschool and Sunday School programs was built in 1970 at a cost of \$267,000. The final payment of this building debt was paid in October 1980, relieving Wesley Memorial of some of its growing pains.

The \$500,000 **Activity Building** was completed in March, 1984. This structure houses a gymnasium/fellowship hall, kitchen facilities, several meeting rooms, and offices for pastor, associate pastor and other staff. The **Adult Education Building** was purchased and renovated for meeting rooms in 1997. Our most recent addition, a new entry and **gathering hall**, was completed in 2000. In recent years, we have **also acquired** two South College Road properties that are now now serve as our Adult Education Center and Cub Scout meeting building.

### **Our Pastors**

The **ministers who have guided** Wesley Memorial as she has sought to fulfill her destiny and her ministry are The Reverends:

G. Milton Daniel 1914  
J. H. Miller, Sr. 1915-1918  
J. W. Hoyle 1918-1919  
M.F. Hodges 1919-1921  
C. N. Phillips 1921-1925  
B.F. Houston, Jr. 1925-1927  
A. J. Groves 1927-1930  
H.L. Davis 1930-1934  
O. L. Hathway 1934-1938  
W.R. Stevens 1938-1939  
W.A. Tew 1939-1941  
E. W. Downum 1941-1944  
K. R. Wheeler 1944-1947  
Paul Fields 1947-1948  
J. L. Hartz 1948-1951  
Herman A. Winberry 1951-1954  
John T. Maides 1954-1958  
A.P. Hill, Jr. 1958-1962  
Joseph K. Bostick 1962-1966  
Worth Cotton 1966-1970  
Vernon Tyson 1970-1974  
Charles E. Sparks 1974-1978  
M. Randall Baker 1978-1982  
Millard Warren, Jr. 1982-1984  
William C. Simpson, Jr. 1984-1989  
James C.P. Brown 1989-1990  
Rodney G. Hamm 1990-1996  
Samuel D. McMillan, Jr. 1996-1999  
William C. Spencer 1999-2004  
M. Francis Daniel 2004-present