

# CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH



1874 – 2025

## 151<sup>st</sup> Church Anniversary Celebration

*Celebrating the Past  
Living in the Present  
Looking to the Future*

**Sunday, November 16, 2025**

113 South Piedmont Ave  
Kings Mountain, North Carolina 28086  
704-739-2471 [www.cmkm.org](http://www.cmkm.org)



CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH

151<sup>st</sup>

ANNIVERSARY

1894 - 2025

KINGS MOUNTAIN, N.C.

# **Part 1**

# **1874-1974**

This is a reprint of the  
1874-1974 Centennial  
Observance from  
Homecoming Sunday,  
April 28, 1974.

# CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

KINGS MOUNTAIN, N. C.

CENTENNIAL YEAR

1874 - 1974

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The North Carolina Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1736 and, as the people called Methodist journeyed in all directions as part of the early pioneer settlers, a church home in the community of Kings Mountain was their immediate desire. Those great God-loving men wanted their souls' tent-stakes driven firmly and Christian foundations laid for their families and future generations.

In the midst of struggle and progress, in the heart of the Carolina Industrial Piedmont, the year 1874 was a year of note for the organization and state chartering of the city of Kings Mountain and for the organization of Central Methodist Church under the leadership of the Reverend J. W. North, a native of South Carolina, who had joined the conference in 1849 and served as pastor of the Shelby Circuit from 1873 to 1876.

In the early 1870's I. Walton Garrett and family, Richard Garrett and family, Captain and Mrs. R. S. Sugg, and Bennett R. Willeford came from Edgecomb County to make their home in this sparsely-settled village. They bought property and erected their homes and store buildings. The Garretts operated a general merchandise store; while Captain Sugg ran a drug store. The Garretts also bought large tracts of nearby mountain land.

Being of the Methodist faith, these new-comers attended services at El Bethel, the nearest church of that denomination, located some few miles from Kings Mountain. Since they were establishing permanent homes, they saw the necessity for a church in their immediate locality. An organization was

effected, early in 1874, with the following charter members: Dr. and Mrs. James Wright Tracy, who were pioneer settlers and up to that time members of El Bethel Church. I. Walton Garrett and wife, Richard Garrett and wife, Mrs. R. S. Sugg, and Bennett R. Willeford.

Others were soon added and the group, with the Reverend J. W. North as pastor, held services in the small frame school house, located at the corner of Piedmont Avenue and King Street, where the Jacob S. Mauney Memorial Library now stands. This was a small group to overcome such great obstacles, yet in 1876 they completed their first spiritual home, a one-room frame building which stood on the north-west corner of Piedmont Avenue and Mountain Street. This building served as a place of worship and study for nearly thirty years. In the spirit of true brotherhood, the doors of the old frame church were thrown open to other congregations who had organized but at the time had no church building of their own.

The pastoral appointment, known as the Shelby Circuit, was made up of the following churches: Beulah-Concord, Central, and El Bethel; there were periods of time in which other small churches had to be placed on the circuit. Preaching services were held in each church once a month. Preachers, known then as "Circuit Riders," visited in homes of the members and ministered to their spiritual needs. In 1881, during the ministry of the Reverend J. T. Abernathy, the name of the appointment was changed to Kings Mountain Circuit, with Central and the other churches being a part.

The women of Central Church, sensing the need for greater emphasis on mission work, met in 1888 and organized the Woman's Missionary Society. Mrs. James W. Tracy became the first president and Mrs. R. S. Sugg was elected treasurer. There were six charter members. During the society's early years the song, "Take My Life and Let It Be," was used so often in the opening of meetings that it could well have been called their theme song. Monthly dues, in those early years, were ten cents. A few years later, in 1923, the number of members had



THE FIRST BUILDING OF CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH  
Erected in The Year 1876

increased so much that the one group was divided into circles. The Woman's Missionary Society was changed into the Woman's Society of Christian Service in a charter meeting held on September 1, 1940. More circles were added as the organization grew in size. In December of 1972 another change came in the name of the organization; henceforth it is to be called the United Methodist Women and its circles, of former years, are now to be known as interest groups.

During the early years of Central Church there was a special organization of women recognized as the Ladies' Aid Society. This group took special interest in caring for the parsonage and furniture. Some years later the duties of this particular organization were assumed by a parsonage committee.

In 1903 the young people of the church, under the very capable leadership of Miss Katie Garrett and others, were organized into a group called the Light Bearers. This was succeeded in 1919 by the Epworth League, in 1944 by the Methodist Youth Fellowship, and in 1968 by the United Methodist Youth. A separate group called the children's Missionary Society was sponsored by the women's organization from 1919 until the winter of 1924 when it was disbanded.

In the earlier history of Central Church there is evidence that the members enjoyed their religion to the fullest. Sometimes, when the preacher became overly zealous in the pulpit, some of his flock would sound forth their loud "amens."

During the pastorate of the Reverend George D. Herman, 1900-1903, definite steps were taken toward securing a larger lot and building that would more adequately meet the needs of a growing congregation and Sunday School. A beautiful lot which was just opposite the old church, belonging to Mrs. Lee Allison Falls, was purchased in December of 1904. This tract of land afforded ample space for a church sanctuary, an educational building, and a parsonage. In 1905 the second Central Church building, a stately Gothic structure, was erected



**THE SECOND BUILDING OF CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH**  
**Erected in The Year 1905**

under the leadership of the Reverend G. F. Kirby. The old church property was sold to the Presbyterian congregation; the parsonage property which was located on West Mountain Street was retained for a period of time.

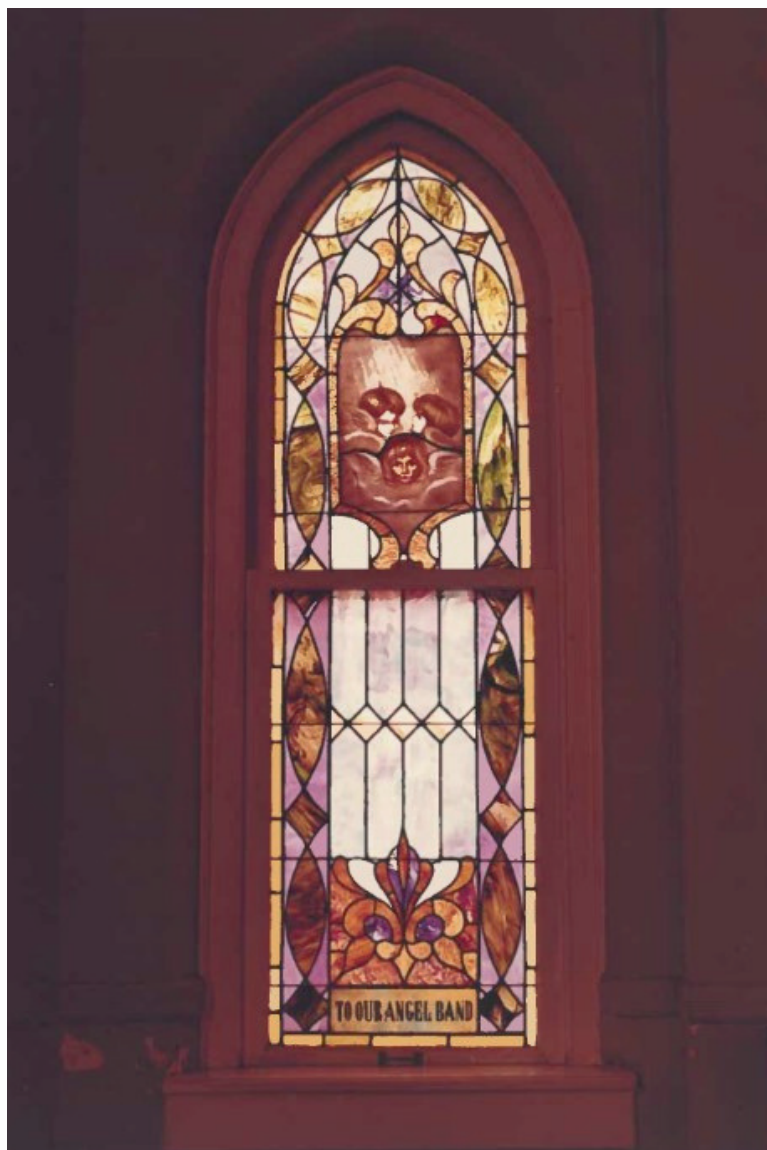
The death of three members of the Light Bearers group provided the inspiration and devotion which led to the purchase of a stained-glass window for the new sanctuary built in 1905. Mite boxes were the means by which the members saved and labored to provide the window, engraved with the wording: "To Our Angel Band!" This window, so precious all through the years since, was redone and placed in the newer sanctuary built in 1967.

The Reverend Doctor Plato Tracy Durham, former member of Central Church and later Dean of Chandler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, delivered the sermon when the second church building was dedicated in 1914.

Nourished by their love and devotion the members of Central Church continued to dream and to make sacrifice. In 1904, during the pastorate of the Reverend M. H. Vestal, the church became recognized as being strong enough to be a station appointment. However, the struggling church was again placed on the Kings Mountain Circuit in the year 1910. It was able to gain the status of station appointment in 1919, which it has maintained ever since.

The first parsonage for the church was at 400 West Mountain Street. After the purchase of a new church site in 1904, a dwelling which stood on the property served as Pastor's House until the present parsonage, an eight-room brick veneer building, was erected during the pastorate of the Reverend J. E. Thompson in 1924. The parsonage has been maintained, adequately, for the minister and his family through the years.

In 1924 a church bell was installed in the church tower "so that it could be rung hereafter!" In the fall of 1936, when the Reverend E. W. Fox was minister, a pipe organ was presented to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Williams. The gift



MEMORIAL WINDOW for "LIGHT BEARERS"  
Placed in The New Sanctuary Built in 1905

brought joy to the congregation and added much to the beauty and worshipfulness of the church service. Vestments for the choir were purchased soon after; this group deserves more than passing mention for the service it renders so faithfully.

During the ministry of the Reverend Doctor J. Garland Winkler, 1941-1948, the people of Central Church began discussing and planning for a long-range building program. This interest gained much momentum and resulted in a building fund being started.

On September 13, 1953, under the leadership of the Reverend Doctor Philip L. Shore, Jr., a ground breaking service was held for the erection of an educational building. This building, completed in the summer of 1954, was furnished throughout, and opened for use in January of 1955. A much smaller educational building, which probably dates from the late 1920's, was utilized in the construction of the new educational building, which contains a number of classrooms, kitchen and fellowship hall and offices and rest rooms. This unit filled long-felt needs as a place for greater educational and fellowship growth for old and young alike. On the 17th day of May, in 1959, a service of dedication for the educational building was conducted by the presiding Bishop, Nolan B. Harmon.

The Sunday School, having been an integral part of the life of Central Church throughout its history, was organized into departments and graded levels in 1959. This new program was carried on successfully under the supervision of the church officials and according to the standards and the directions of the Conference Board of Christian Education.

The spirit of progress did not grow cold or it did not become musty with mediocrity for the people of Central Methodist Church, as the indebtedness on the educational building was eliminated. Even in the midst of the Service of Dedication, a spark seemed to come forth anew from the long and never-forgotten dream of a new sanctuary.

Under the leadership of the Reverend James B.



THE CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH CHOIR  
In The Chancel Area of The First Church, 1903

McLarty and the Reverend Herbert D. Garmon, with full agreement from the church officials and members, there continued to come forth hope and inspiration, with special emphasis on a "Building Fund." A climatic hour came when, through the love and devotion of a former member, Mrs. Lizzie Jackson Thorne, daughter of Mrs. Rossie A. Goforth (Mrs. I. B. Goforth), who with a heart of steadfast devotion, even during her last illness, left a special gift to Central Methodist Church.

Encouraged anew by this benevolent devotion, the Christmas season of 1959 proved to be a focal point in crystalizing the people's determination for a new sanctuary. As a result, the calendar year began with approximately \$35,000.00 on hand.

The Reverend Howard Jordan, pastor from 1963-1967, sensing the dedicated determination of the congregation, recommended that a planning committee be appointed by the Official Board. After due consideration, evaluation, and prayerful thought, the committee's recommendation for a new sanctuary was accepted by the official body and by the congregation. The "Go Signal" having been given, the Building Committee, the Building Fund Committee, and the Memorial Gifts Committee were all to become active in the process of attaining a goal; a new sanctuary.

The architect joined with Mr. B. S. Peeler, Jr., Chairman of the Building Committee, and the Reverend Howard R. Jordan, pastor, as partners in the great project. Step by step, with unnumbered hours of labor, they brought forth plans which were readily acceptable by the official board and the congregation.

The hour was nigh. A temporary sanctuary was set up in the Fellowship Hall. The dismantling of the old sanctuary began on July 4, 1966, and was completed on August 12th. Three days later, August 15, 1966, actual construction began on the new sanctuary.

As members passed the corner of Mountain and Piedmont, while the old sanctuary was being removed, there was a note of sadness on their faces



**NAVE AND CHANCEL AREA OF THIRD SANCTUARY**  
**Built in 1967**

and in their hearts as they remembered both the joys and the sorrows experienced in their spiritual home in the years gone by. As the new sanctuary took shape this nostalgia was succeeded by a feeling of pride and determination to build for the future, upon the firm foundation of the past. Many memorial and honoraria gifts began to become a part of the resources, and special plaques were set aside in the narthex of the sanctuary in loving recognition of this devotion.

This is not the whole story by any means. Many persons, within the congregation and without, the members and the friends, those far and near; these are the unlisted and the unsung. Their prayers have been answered, their joys realized and their dream has come true. They sacrificed so unselfishly that it seems the only appropriate comment would be: "Here is the House of God, mortared together with the great cement of the Holy Spirit and the love and devotion of man!"

The new sanctuary was completed on June 9, 1967, and the first Service of Worship was held on June 11, 1967. What a joy! What a blessing! Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy!

On October 29, 1967, the Service of Consecration was held, under the guidance of the pastor, the Reverend D. B. Alderman. Bishop Earl G. Hunt, Jr., preached the sermon. Dr. Charles D. White, Superintendent of the Gastonia District, the Reverend James B. McLarty, and the Reverend Howard R. Jordan, former pastors of Central Church, and others assisted in the service.

As we, the members of Central Church, assess the effectiveness of our labors in Christ under the capable leadership of the Reverend R. Paschal Waugh, we believe that we have cause for rejoicing. Great financial strides have been made in the church. During February and March of 1972 a very successful Financial Crusade was held. A goal of \$256,000.00, which included current budget amount and building fund indebtedness over a period of 33 months, was almost all pledged. Figures taken from Conference Journals reveal a most interesting story. For the three years just prior to the

year in which the Financial Crusade was held the church paid, annually, \$14,400.00 toward the debt liquidation. The following three conference years reveal the following figures: June 1, 1971 through May 31, 1972 \$20,400.00 paid on the indebtedness; June 1, 1972 through December 31, 1972 (a seven-months conference year) \$26,124.00 paid; January 1, 1973 through December 31, 1973 \$37,200.00 paid on the indebtedness.

Although the above figures are most encouraging, they give, by no means, the whole picture of progress being made at Central Methodist Church. With a definite feeling of spiritual growth, with a sharp increase in church membership and a very beautiful sanctuary well on the way to being debt free, we are aware that concrete accomplishments have been made. We view these with humble gratitude and look forward with courage and vision to new horizons in the great spirit of Christ's love and fellowship.

Now an efficient Administrative Board, including in its membership a number of younger men of the church, has charge of our business and financial affairs and works closely with the pastor in the total program of the Church. In March of 1974 the Reverend D. Ronald Allen became an assistant minister in the church, with special responsibility for working with the church's youth.

Services of Worship, the United Methodist Youth meetings, and other regular services are held in the church on Sunday mornings and evenings, and a mid-week prayer service is held on Wednesday evenings. Regular meetings are held for the active organizational structure of the church such as: Administrative Board, Council on Ministries, the United Methodist Women, the United Methodist Men (organized in 1961), the United Methodist Youth, commissions and committees, chancel choir, children's choir, etc.

The above is a brief chronicle of Central United Methodist Church, in so far as we are able to gather the facts, but no statements can be given to tell in full the accomplishment and far-reaching influence of this church during the period of



A historic photograph capturing the construction of the 1905 Central Methodist Church sanctuary. The names of several builders—W. O. Falls, W. P. Herndon, and C. B. Falls — are handwritten on the original image.

a century. This record can only be found in the "Archives on High." The sermons by the pastors, the prayers by the saints; these can never be put together and given a place in the continuing and sacred drama. These immortal things live on in lives made better and in the hearts and songs of the redeemed around the throne of God. The early leaders of Central Church, and so many who came afterwards, had new hearts burning with a passion for advancing the Kingdom of God, and have asked no greater reward than souls won for Christ.

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NOTE: For much of the information contained in this historical sketch your historian is so deeply indebted to a previous publication for Central United Methodist Church, dated October 29, 1967, and compiled by the Reverend D. B. Alderman. In addition, my sincere appreciation is extended to the following persons whose recollections have proved of invaluable service in this composition: Mrs. Grady King, Mrs. M. L. Houser, Mrs. Frank Goforth and Mrs. O. P. Lewis. Other helpful sources of information were: The minutes of Quarterly Conference action of earlier years, the minutes of the Woman's Missionary Society, the minutes of the Epworth League, an old deed, dated in 1904, and a family Bible.

Miss Janet Falls, Historian



SENIOR CHOIR - 1951

1st Row - Rusey Thronburg, Carolyn Payseur, Jane Ormand, Jo Ann Dixon, Nell Eiser, Mary Alice McDaniel, Winnie Pulton, Sue Dixon, Shirley Falls, Dot Hayes, Dot Dixon, and Bonnie McIntosh, Organist & Choir Director  
2nd Row - Earl Marlowe, Jr., John Warlick, Jay Patterson, Jr., Delbert Dixon, Sonny Peeler, Bill Peeters, Jake Dixon, Bud Hayes, Arthur Walker & Reginald Murray.

PASTORS OF CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Kings Mountain, North Carolina

J. W. North - - - - -	1874-76	E. G. Kilgore - - - - -	1907
H. T. Hudson - - - - -	1877-78	D. F. Carver - - - - -	1908-09
W. D. Lee - - - - -	1879	M. B. Clegg - - - - -	1910-13
J. S. Erwin - - - - -	1880	E. O. Cole - - - - -	1914-15
J. T. Abernathy - - - - -	1881	R. M. Hoyle - - - - -	1916
J. W. Jones - - - - -	1882-83	R. A. Swaringen - - - - -	1917
H. F. Wiley - - - - -	1884	E. L. Kirk - - - - -	1918-20
J. W. Wheeler - - - - -	1885	R. M. Hoyle - - - - -	1921-23
W. H. Townsend - - - - -	1886	J. E. Thompson - - - - -	1924
J. R. Betts - - - - -	1887	O. P. Ader - - - - -	1925-27
S. B. Turrentine - - - - -	1888-89	J. R. Church - - - - -	1928-31
J. B. Carpenter - - - - -	1890	W. O. Goode - - - - -	1932-33
W. S. Hales - - - - -	1891	J. W. Williams - - - - -	1934
J. W. Bowman - - - - -	1892	E. W. Fox - - - - -	1935-38
T. J. Evans - - - - -	1893	Henry C. Sprinkle, Jr. -	1939
C. C. Brothers - - - - -	1894	Henry C. Sprinkle, Sr. -	1940-41
J. D. Arnold - - - - -	1895	J. Garland Winkler - - -	1941-48
Z. Paris - - - - -	1896	J. H. Brendall - - - - -	1948-52
J. W. Downum - - - - -	1897	Philip L. Shore, Jr. - -	1952-55
D. H. Comann - - - - -	1898-99	James B. McLarty - - - -	1955-59
G. D. Hernan - - - - -	1900-03	Herbert D. Garmon - - - -	1959-63
M. H. Vestal - - - - -	1904	Howard R. Jordan - - - -	1963-67
G. F. Kirby - - - - -	1905-06	D. B. Alderman - - - - -	1967-71
		R. Paschal Waugh - - - -	1971-75



# Part 2

# 1974-2025

Following the 1874-1974 Centennial Observance, this continuation highlights the people, ministries, and milestones that have shaped Central Methodist Church over the past fifty one years—reflecting our ongoing journey of faith from generation to generation.

**Pastors of Central Methodist Church  
1975-2025**

Rev. Robert E. Boggan, Jr. ....1975-1981

Rev. Ivan A. Stephens.....1981-1984

Rev. George Auman .....1984-1989

Rev. Robert W. Little .....1989-1993

Rev. Harold Schwantes .....1993-1998

Rev. Harrison Hinson .....1998-2001

Rev. Janice Combs .....2001-2007

Rev. Tony Dowdy.....2007-2010

Rev. Rex Gibbs .....2010-2016

Rev. Jill Rhinehart .....2016-2018

Rev. Billy Towery .....2018-2019

Rev. Bruce Gwyn .....2019-2023

Rev. Perry Hines.....2023-



**1980s Methodist Men's Soup Sale**



**Pastor Perry and KIDS Central children  
being presented with their Bibles in 2025**

As Methodists, we serve our church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. Throughout our history, Central Methodist has always looked for ways to minister not only to its own members but those who may need help in the community. This ministry has taken many forms over the years, from preaching missions, community projects, and mission trips. Following is a summary of happenings in our church since our 100th anniversary in 1974. Each ministry has truly been a way to share the love of Christ.

### **Annual Fall Preaching Mission**

In 1980, Central began a yearly tradition of inviting a visiting minister to conduct a series of services which usually began on Sunday morning, continuing Sunday evening, and several days the following week. Most of the Fall Preaching Missions were held in either October or November. Services were held on Sunday morning with evening services on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. In addition to the evening services, luncheon Bible studies were held on Mondays and Tuesdays. During the fifteen years the Fall Preaching Mission was held, ministers from out of town as well as local pastors conducted the services. The credentials of the ministers who led the services were quite impressive with several well-known Christian authors among them. It was quite an honor to have them lead our services. The Preaching Mission services were well attended not only by our church members, but members of other congregations in the area. Music was provided by Central's choir, and often, guest choirs from other Kings Mountain churches were invited.

## **The Russell Class Christmas Project**

For many years, the police department in Kings Mountain took used bicycles and repaired them to hand out to children in need at Christmas. When they discontinued their project, David and Marie Brinkley presented the idea of taking on that project to their Sunday School Class. At that time, the class was taught by Bill Russell and had great attendance with many young couples. The class really liked the idea and in 1982, took on the project.

The project began with a used toy drive and expanded each year. The class began to buy and wrap gifts each Christmas which were given to families whose names were provided by

Social Services and then the school system. To be able to reach more children, the class decided to organize a large fundraising event. Inspired by the Kiwanis Club's pancake supper before one of the home football games, the Russell class decided to try a spaghetti supper. The project was truly a group effort, and thanks to the participation of the church family and the community, the spaghetti suppers were a huge success, with each supper more successful than the year before. The funds raised helped the class reach hundreds of children in need. The project expanded to add groceries and blankets.



Eventually, the class decided they could raise as much money by just asking the Church Family and local business owners to contribute to the project, and that worked well for many years. Over the last few years, the class focused on groceries and blankets, having been told by a school social worker that those were the greatest needs. The Russell Christmas project continued until 2024, when project funds were equally divided among the five elementary schools in the old Kings Mountain school district. For over 30 years, The Russell Class Christmas Project was one of love and a testament to the willingness of class members to help those in need.

## **The Early Service**

During the pastorate of Rev. Harrison Hinson, interest was expressed in exploring the possibility of a contemporary service. At this time there were several Methodist churches in the Charlotte area who were either incorporating contemporary music in their traditional services or having services that were totally contemporary. Several members from Central along with Rev. Hinson visited these churches to get ideas. In the summer of 2002, after the completion of the CAC, and during the pastorate of Rev. Janice Combs, a contemporary Early Service was started. Sunday mornings were filled with Praise and Worship at 9:30 AM, Sunday School at 10:45 AM, and a Traditional Service at 11 AM. Several people served as praise and worship leaders with Teresa Hopper serving for over 13 years. The Early Service was successful but ended when the Covid pandemic forced not only our church, but churches in general, to change how we conducted services.





## Missions

Not only have the members of Central participated in projects benefitting those in need here at home, but they have also frequently supported those in other countries as well. In 2003, a member of Central joined a mission trip to Costa Rica. That trip was the first of what became a yearly mission trip to Campamento Casi Cielo with members of Central as well as participants from other area churches. These yearly mission trips ended in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. In 2015, Central began supporting Manos de Fe in Panama when one of our members joined a trip there. Subsequent trips were made in 2018 thru the early 2020s with the most recent trip in the summer of 2025. Plans are for this mission trip to continue each year.

Currently, our church partners with many local ministries, including the Backpack Ministry, Bethel Colony, the Community Kitchen, Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry, Kings Mountain Schools, Operation Christmas Child, the Relay for Life, and Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina. In addition to our participation with Manos de Fe, we also currently help support Appalachian Chapel, Next Generation Impact, 106.9 The Light FM, Project Bible Runners, and Mercy House Global.

## **The Carpenter's Clubhouse Preschool Program**

In 2010, the idea was developed to begin a preschool program at Central which was open to any preschool child in the area. The Carpenter's Clubhouse Preschool Program operated five days a week and classes were conducted by three teachers using the preschool and kindergarten classrooms in the Educational Building. A playground with child-safe equipment was constructed outside with entrances from the Educational Building and also the Christian Activities Center. The preschool program was a wonderful outreach of our church and a service to many parents in the community. The preschool program lasted until 2020, when a combination of factors including the Covid pandemic, influenced its closing.



## **Programs of Recognition**

In 1991, the Ben Beam Scholarship program began. Mr. Ben Beam had served as treasurer of Central Methodist Church for over 30 years and was honored with the scholarship in his name for graduating seniors. In 2010, the fund was being depleted and it was decided to merge the fund into the endowment fund. In Mr. Beam's memory, over 50 High School graduates from Central Methodist Church have been honored with a monetary gift. In 2003 the Propst Scholarship began to honor each of our graduating High School seniors as well. To date, 78 young people from Central have been the recipients of the Propst Scholarship. In 2024, the

The Crescendo award program in honor of Sonny Peeler was begun. Sonny Peeler was so generous with his time at Central and often took care of tasks without ever being asked. Each year, the Crescendo awards recognize those members who, like Sonny Peeler, unselfishly donate their time and talents to the church. To date, there have been 8 church members who have been presented with a Crescendo award.

*\*Lists of Ben Beam Scholarship recipients, Propst Scholarship recipients, and Crescendo Award recipients may be found in the History Room located on the second floor of the Education Building to the left as you exit the elevator.*

## **The Music Program**

Throughout the history of Central Methodist Church, outstanding musicians have led our services. Our church has been known throughout the community as having excellent adult and children's choirs, and a first-rate handbell choir. During the 1980s and 1990s Linda Dixon served as our Christian Education Director, as well as succeeding Myrle McClure as Central's Music Director. Because of Linda's determination to make a quality church music experience available to all of the children in our church, she drove the church bus to each elementary school in town and carried Central's children back to the church for a snack and choir practice. Those after school rehearsals paid off as the children of our church performed musical plays based on biblical teachings for our congregation and traveled each year to music camps at Lake Junaluska. Adult choir members were challenged to perform works of music by outstanding Christian composers and that continues to day under the direction of Justin Harper. In addition to choral music, the Bells of Praise, Central's Hand Bell choir was begun in 1985, and has become a special part of our music program. Today the Bells of Praise, under the direction of Teresa Williams, performs for church services and presents a seasonal concert at Christmas. They have performed at churches in Shelby and Gastonia, here in Kings Mountain for a Christmas exhibit for The Woman's Club, and have been called on for wedding ceremonies and funeral services. Currently, at the beginning of each Sunday service, the Praise Band under the direction of our church music director, Justin Harper, leads our congregation in contemporary praise songs.

The music is energetic, engaging, and the words help the congregation prepare to be blessed by the sermon. The musical talents of our men, women, children, and youth have been featured in our choirs and instrumental ensembles, and will continue to enrich each gathering of our church family.

## **The Scout Program**

Central has a long history of sponsoring Girl Scout, Brownie Scout, Cub Scout, and Boy Scout troops. Currently our church sponsors Boy Scout Troop 92, and Cub Scout Pack 92, Meetings are held in the Crawford House, owned by Central and located adjacent to the church parking lot on Piedmont Avenue. Our church purchased the property owned by Donald Crawford in 2018. Mr. Crawford was involved in scouting for over 80 years, both here in Kings Mountain and in the state. It is fitting that his former home is now used for scouting purposes. Boy Scout Troop 92 has a long and proud history. Originally formed in 1935 as Troop 6, it has had several stops and starts. In 1985, was its newest beginning at First Baptist Church of Kings Mountain where it resided for many years, until in 2016, when two troops merged to form the bigger, better Troop 92 and found new sponsorship at Central Methodist Church. Troop 92 follows the evangelical Christian beliefs of our church, and all adult leaders and volunteers demonstrate behavior consistent with these values. Currently, five members of Troop 92 will soon fulfill requirements to be named Eagle Scouts.





Nursery 1950s



1st Row - Kelly Dixon, Mrs. Willie P. Patterson, Mrs. C. A. Butterworth, Rev. Philip Shore  
2nd Row - Baxter Payseur, A. H. Patterson, Fred Wright, Sr., B. S. Neill, I. Ben Goforth  
3rd Row - B.S. Peeler, Sr., L. L. Alexander, W. M. Gantt, Wilson Griffin, Paul Walker



DEDICATION OF THE EDUCATION BUILDING - 1959

## *Dedication of the Education Building 1959*



**Parsonage 1924-1985**



**Current Parsonage**



**Youth & Young Adult Sunday  
May 25, 2025**



**2018 Family  
Fellowship Night  
Chair Volleyball**



**Outdoor Service  
during Covid**



**Central Methodist Women  
Parade of Tables 2018**



**Operation Christmas Child Volunteers**



**2025 Mission Trip Team**



**2025 Annual Fall Festival**



**Community Kitchen Volunteers 10/2025**



**KIDS Central Easter Event 2025**





## **Sunday School and Activities for All Ages**

Built in 1954, the Educational Building at Central has provided a spacious home for Sunday School classes for children as well as adults. While classes graded by age was the norm for children and youth for most of our history, the 2020 Covid Pandemic changed the way our Sunday School was organized. Now KIDS Central, the children's program, meets on Sunday morning during the regular worship service. Classes include a Nursery (children under 3 years old), Preschool (3 years - Pre Kindergarten), and Elementary (Kindergarten - 6th grade). The children are present for the Praise songs in the regular service and then go to their assigned classes in the Educational Building. Youth (Grade 6 - 12) meet before the morning worship service, and there are currently two Adult groups meeting at that same time.

Throughout our history, summer Bible School classes have been offered for our children. Oftentimes, we worked with the other churches in town, using the talents of teachers from each church, with large numbers of children participating.

Classes were held on a rotating basis in a different church each year, as the teachers from all the churches worked together to choose interesting curricula. For the past two years, Central sponsored its own Bible School, which was a huge success. Not only were there large numbers of children attending from our church, but also from the community as well. In 2025, a staff of fifteen very committed volunteer teachers from Central led activities teaching the children about the Bible and the love of Jesus.



## **Central Methodist Church's 2025 Vacation Bible School**

Church Family Wednesday Night Fellowship meals are held the second Wednesday each month at 6:15, prior to Chancel Choir Practice in the CAC. Not only are those attending able to take a break from cooking, but they can enjoy an evening of inter-generational fun with activities such as special missions programs, games, line dancing, and cake walks to name a few. Interested adults can participate in small group activities during the day or evening to grow together in faith. Currently, groups offer morning and evening Bible studies, a prayer group, a breakfast group and other ways to connect with interested church members. Senior adults gather four times a year to travel to interesting sites and events in the area.

## **Youth Fellowship**

Perhaps one of the most important and most active groups at our church is our youth group which is made up of young people between the ages of 6th grade and 12th grade. Through the years, our very capable youth leaders have led our young people in activities that not only have taught them the love of Christ but also have instilled in them Christian values that will stay with them throughout their lives as they make life choices as adults. And of course, they have had fun and enjoyed every experience from camping trips to mission trips, eating out at favorite restaurants, and meeting for game nights. For quite a few years now, our youth have joined youth groups from all the other churches in Kings Mountain for DNOW, a large youth event held every spring at First Baptist Church. DNOW stands for Discipleship Now and is a jam-packed weekend of music and fellowship activities. Our youth have also participated in prayer activities for the schools, as well as "See You At the Pole" which is held before the school day begins. Students have an opportunity to meet together at the flagpole to pray for the school and community.

## **Methodist Men and Central Methodist Women**

Over the last 50 years the women's and men's organizations of our church have contributed so much, not only in monetary contributions to missions, but in offering an opportunity for fellowship to all who have taken part in their activities. Organized and chartered in 1961, the men of the church have participated in not only service projects around our church, but they have also sent volunteer teams to disaster areas such as the Mississippi Coast interfaith Disaster Task Force in 1999. Each year they conduct a soup sale to raise funds for various mission projects.

Originally organized as the Woman's Missionary Society in 1885, the women of the church have always been ready to lend a helping hand when needed for projects in our church, or when finding ways to contribute to various mission projects. Through the years the women's organization has gone through several name changes, but the mission to reach out to others and extend the love of Christ has remained the same.

The women have organized yard sales, taste fairs, bazaars, and even published a cookbook in 1990, all projects to raise funds for various mission projects. In 1977 the first of two Taste Fairs was held with a great response from both our church and community. For the Fair, each Circle decorated a room and prepared a themed meal including a main course, sides, and dessert. Guest bought tickets and were served samples from each room and a cook book was printed with all of the recipes. A second Taste Fair was held in 2007 with each Circle again hosting a themed meal with decorations. It was definitely a fun event for all participants.

Each Fall the Methodist Men host a soup sale. The successful event has been enjoyed by not only church members but the community as well. For quite a few years, the women of the church held a bake sale and craft bazaar at the same time as the soup sale. The bake sale and craft bazaar eventually evolved into a huge yard sale hosted by the women and held in the CAC. Items were collected for months, resulting in a huge amount of clothes and household items to sell.

Perhaps one of the most successful projects taken on by the women was the Parade of Tables which began in 2010 and continued until 2023 with the exception of 2020 due to Covid. The Parade of Tables each year boasted 20 to 30 tables decorated with myriad themes showcasing the creative talents of both the women and men of our church. In a collaborative effort with the men, who always prepared a delicious meal, and with the help of the youth who served as waiters and waitresses, the women were able to support several special local mission projects and charities. Those charities have included the Battered Women's Shelter, Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry, Children's Homes of Cleveland County, and our own Russell Fellowship Class Christmas Project. Through the years, the Parade of Tables has allowed the women of our church to contribute around \$50,000 to these special causes.

Both the Methodist Men and the Central Methodist Women of Kings Mountain, as they are now known, welcome all interested men and women of the church. Men's meetings are held once monthly, and the women meet once each quarter.

## **Central's Response to the Covid 19 Pandemic**

Early in 2020, the news had story after story about the worldwide spread of the Covid 19 Coronavirus. Not since 1918 and the Spanish Influenza pandemic had the world faced such a fast-moving, dangerous, and life-threatening virus. As the virus began to spread in our country, many changes began to affect our everyday lives.

Schools closed, only essential businesses were allowed to stay open, and all gatherings, both church and otherwise, were cancelled. After considering ways our church could function and still protect its members, our last in-person service was Sunday, March 15. As of March 18th, 2020, for the next two months, all Sunday services and in-person meetings were cancelled. The church office remained closed, and our pastor, Rev. Bruce Gwyn, broadcast online devotions, prayers, and words of encouragement. Even our Easter service on April 12, 2020, came to us via the internet. However, not satisfied with staying home and away from church on Sunday morning, our church began outdoor services in the parking lot beside the CAC. Sound equipment, a keyboard, and equipment to livestream the service were carried in and out of the church each Sunday morning. And the congregation responded in large numbers, carrying their own folding chairs, or sitting in their cars, Services were held at 9:30 AM each Sunday morning while the parking lot was shaded. The congregation enjoyed beautiful weather, not one day of rain, and balmy temperatures every Sunday until September 27, 2020, when we moved into the CAC. Chairs in the CAC were spaced out to restrict the spread of the virus, and the room and chairs were cleaned and disinfected after every service. Worship services continued safely in the CAC until Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021 when the congregation moved back into the sanctuary, practicing spaced out seating. We gradually resumed most of our normal activities, although some were on a different schedule. Before the Covid pandemic restrictions, Central had offered two services each Sunday, an early Contemporary service at 9:30am, and a later Traditional service at 11:00am. Beginning after Covid and continuing today, we have a 10:00am blended service which features both Contemporary and Traditional elements.

## **Disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church**

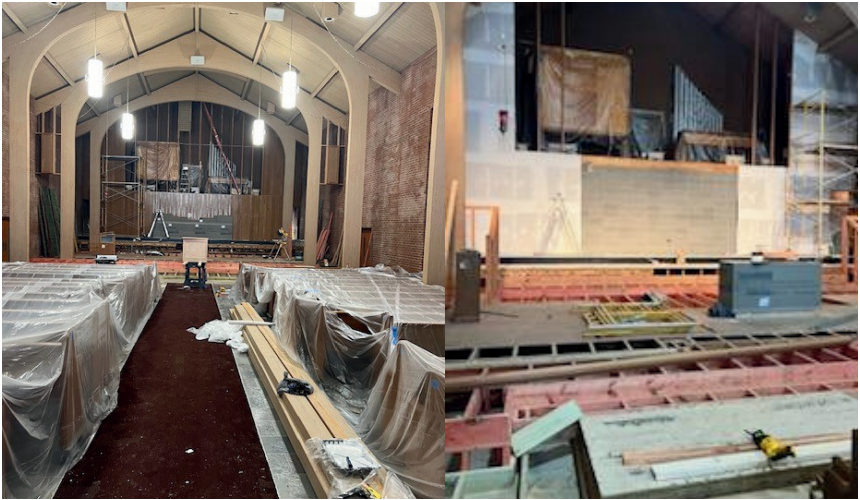
In September of 2016, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church reaffirmed the language of the Discipline. However, there was much disdain in the more progressive US churches, and it was decided that a special conference should be called to address those issues. At a special conference called in March of 2019, when agreement could not be found in the language of the Discipline Social Principles, Paragraph 2553 of the 2016 Discipline was approved to allow for disaffiliation. After much prayer and lengthy discussions, on May 11, 2022, a letter was sent to Rev. David Christy, District Superintendent of the Catawba Valley District of the Western NC Conference of the United Methodist Church, that stated our desire at Central to start the process of disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. On September 25, 2022, at 5:00 pm, a Church Conference was held at Central for the purpose of voting on disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. In order to vote, professing members of our church had to be present at the appointed time of the conference. There were no proxy or "write in" votes. The disaffiliation resolution was approved by 2/3 of the 104 members in attendance. The disaffiliation became effective May 7, 2023. It was decided that our church will now be known as Central Methodist Church, our original name before the merger with the United Methodist Church in 1968. On May 9, 2023, Central joined The Global Methodist Church. After much consideration, we feel being a part of the GMC will allow our church to enjoy and benefit from being connected to other traditional, orthodox, Wesleyan Methodist churches, an advantage not only for our members, but our pastor as well.

## **Remodeled Sanctuary and Current Church Campus**

In 2023, the membership of Central voted to approve remodeling the sanctuary. Built in 1967, our sanctuary had issues with the wiring and sound systems that needed updating. The arrangement of the rostrum of the sanctuary was not adequate to support the musicians and instruments required for the more contemporary music we had begun to use in our services. Being careful to keep and protect all of the Christian symbols in our sanctuary, and working with a qualified architect and planner, church members serving on the committee to oversee renovations came up with exactly the right plan to accomplish what was needed.

The brick walls were whitewashed, pew cushions were reupholstered with lighter material, and the carpet was replaced with light wood flooring. The beautiful wrought iron Rood Screen was moved to the wall behind the choir loft which served to emphasize its beautiful cross. Pews in the choir loft were removed and replaced with individual cushioned chairs which could easily be moved if that space were needed for the handbell choir or any other special program needing that area. Video screens were mounted on the left and right of the altar area as well as in the rear of the sanctuary for displaying scriptures, words of hymns or illustrations to accompany the sermon.

In addition to our beautiful sanctuary, today the Central Methodist Church campus includes the Educational Building, completed in 1954, and the spacious Christian Activities Center, completed in 2002. Due to careful architectural planning, all three buildings are connected and handicap accessible. Elevators are available to access the classrooms on the second floor of the Educational Building and the stage in the CAC.



## **Remodeled Sanctuary and Current Church Campus**

In 2007 money from the Endowment Fund was allocated to help finance a Columbarium with 96 niches which is located in a sheltered area between the south wall of the CAC and the north wall of the Educational Building. The quiet, landscaped area has benches for visitors and is protected by a stately wrought iron gate.

Although it is true, that the appearance of Central Methodist Church has changed since our beginning in 1874, without a doubt one thing has not changed and that is that we remain a church committed to loving Jesus. We are grounded

in the Scriptures and ready to share the Christian faith as we go about our daily lives. When future generations look back at our history, it is our prayer that they continue to love our church just as our current members, those who have gone before us, and those who had the vision to organize this church.

## Acknowledgements

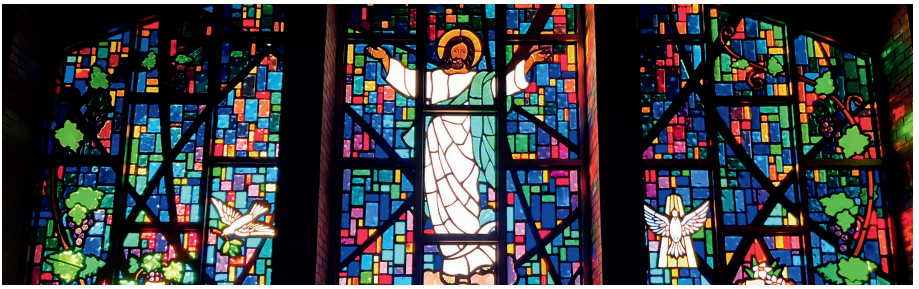
In addition to the historical account of Central Methodist compiled by Miss Janet Falls, Historian, for the 100th anniversary of our church in 1974, the following members of our church contributed information for this update to our history:

Teresa Williams, Jim Potter, Allan Propst, Marie and David Brinkley, Faye Bennett, Mark Dixon, Carol Velky, David "Big Mac" McDaniel, Tim Miller, Teresa Hopper, Joe Patterson, and Kalin Brooks. Special thanks go to our Administrative Assistant, Candy Love, who helped research digital accounts for information concerning our church, printed our History Booklets and helped put the photos we collected into a video for all of us to enjoy.

### Libby Putnam, Historian



July 1974



## Sanctuary Symbolism

The large faceted glass window at the rear of the balcony is centered with the figure of Christ ascending into Heaven to be seated at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). He is surrounded by the following Christian symbols:

- The dove holding an olive branch is the Christian symbol for peace.
- The crown symbolizes the fact that Christ is the King of Kings.
- The chalice symbolizes the Holy Communion and the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross (Matt. 26:27).
- On the right side of the figure of Christ is a dove ascending, representing the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible is pictured with white lilies, which symbolize purity.
- The grapes, a recurring theme in many of our windows, represents the blood of Christ.

As one ascends the stairs to the balcony, there is another faceted glass window as well as a stained glass window from the 1905 sanctuary.

The stained glass window is titled the Angel Band and was a memorial to three members of the youth in the early 1900's who lost their lives in an accident. The children of the church collected money in "mite boxes" to pay for the window.



## Sanctuary Symbolism

The Candles in our sanctuary represent Jesus, the Light of the World. They are a reminder to worshippers that they, too, are called to be light in the world.

- The two candles placed on the altar are a reminder of Jesus Who is both God and Man.
- The red "presence candle" or sanctuary lamp, which hangs near the pulpit, is an everlasting flame and is never extinguished. It represents the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Christ Candle, near the baptismal font, symbolizes the risen Christ and is lit for each worship service.
- The Baptismal Font is a reminder of God's adoption of believers into His family and a sign of His covenant with His people. The font is placed on an octagonal base because eight is the number of regeneration and new life.



The symbolism of the faceted glass window prior to entering into the balcony area has the following symbols:

- Two tablets represent the Ten Commandments,
- symbolic of the fact that the law of God is eternal,
- not to be changed or deleted.
- The cross symbolizes the victory of Jesus over sin and death.
- Again the theme of the vine and grapes symbolizes that
- Jesus is the vine and we are the branches.



As we leave the worship service, we again pass through an area of transition, this time outside of the Narthex. As we exit the doors of the church, we are reminded that we now must prepare to share God's love with the world.

## Sanctuary Symbolism

Upon completion of our original sanctuary in 1967 and the renovation in 2024, members were certainly impressed with the beauty of the interior of the church. The beauty of the sanctuary was secondary, however, to the symbolism to be found in the construction. Following is a listing of the symbolism to be found inside of our sanctuary.

- (There are twelve pillars supporting the beams in the sanctuary. They are representative of the twelve disciples and the twelve tribes of Israel.
- The beams, which give the interior of the Nave, the seating area, the appearance of an upside-down ark, do not appear to touch the ceiling. That is symbolic of the fact that Jesus is the foundation of the church, and He will support the church.
- The eight chandeliers are encircled with thorns representing the crown of thorns worn by Christ. The fact that there are eight chandeliers is representative of the eight beatitudes.
- Shepherds hooks surround the stained glass window, within the sanctuary, representing Christ as our Shepherd.



The church is built in the shape of a cross with "parts" in the North, South, East, and West.

- The Altar is in the East (as Jerusalem is in the East, the sun rises in the East, and Jesus will return in the East).
- The Nave, seating a large group of people, is in the West. The congregation faces the East and the rising sun, symbolic of the presence of Christ, the Light of the World.
- The Pulpit serves as the focal point for gospel readings, sermons, and scripture readings.
- The Narthex is at the West end of the church and is a place of setting aside.

## Sanctuary Symbolism

Originally, an Altar was a special place made of stone where people made sacrifices. The marble top of our Altar is symbolic of those stone altars.

Three steps, symbolizing faith, hope, and love, lead up to the platform on which the Altar is placed.



The ornate screen behind our Altar is called a Rood (Rood means cross) Screen or Reredos.

- The Rood Screen originally separated the choir from the body of the Nave. It was used to minimize the visual distraction of movement in the choir area.



- The empty cross which is placed on the screen symbolizes the risen Christ. It is a reminder of the cross on which Jesus gave up his own life in order to pay for the sins of the world. The cross is a symbol of Christianity and is an image of God's power and of hope.
- The Rood Screen/Reredos in our sanctuary has five panels which are symbolic of the five wounds of Christ. Made of wrought iron, the screen has a grape vine pattern to remind us that Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches (John 15:5)....we are all connected. The faceted glass windows on either side of the Nave carry out the same theme of the vine and branches.

## SANCTUARY SYMBOLISM

The Narthex is where we take a few moments to transition from our busy worlds and prepare to enter a new space, a consecrated place that has been set aside for the worship of God.

There is also symbolism in the windows of the Narthex. The brightly colored faceted glass window which faces the street in front of the church shows Christ teaching the children and reminds us to become as little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).



The window on the side of the Narthex features hands holding palm branches. The waving of palm branches during the time of Christ was a symbol of victory and praise and marked the presence of royalty, and of course, were waved and laid in the path of Christ on His entry into Jerusalem.



The Sanctuary is the most holy part of the church and is where the Altar is situated. It is separated from the Nave of the church by altar rails at which communicants kneel to receive Holy Communion. When our church was originally built in 1967, there were gates on the altar rails. The gates were to remind us that the altar is open to whosoever will come. Today the term sanctuary in Methodist churches includes the nave, chancel and choir areas.



The Sanctuary Symbolism was  
Compiled by Linda Dixon, Lisa Howell,  
Teresa Williams, Libby Putnam, and  
Dru White, with information from various  
resources and recollections of  
information compiled and  
related to the congregation  
by the late B.S. "Sonny" Peeler, Jr.

**To see the photo slideshow video that was  
played during our 151st Church Anniversary  
service on 11/16/25, please  
scan the QR Code below.**

