

**Historical Highlights of Christ United Methodist Church
And It's Sister Churches, Madison Street and Providence Avenue Methodist
Churches prepared for the 130th Anniversary Celebration, September 16, 2001**

Christ United Methodist Church is in it's 136th year of service of Christian ministry to the peoples of the greater Chester Area. The following is a reprinting of the histories of South Chester Methodist Church, and it's sister congregations, Madison Street Methodist Church and Providence Avenue Methodist Church, whose members formed the nucleus of the present Christ Church. In reality, our Methodist Heritage traces to the 1770's and the Methodist Circuit Riders. Hopefully, our congregational heritage will reach new readers through reprinting these brief histories in the Trumpet and perhaps provide motivation to reflect on the Christian heritage of your individual families. We are a diverse congregation, yet we are common in our sharing of the Good News of the ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dennis H. Bartow, ED.D.
Historian/Archivist

South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church-Christ United Methodist Church

The history of Christ United Methodist Church has its origins in the establishment of Methodism in Colonial Chester where the spiritual needs of its peoples were ministered to by the Methodist Circuit Riders. Francis Asbury, the first Methodist Bishop in America, preached in Chester as witnessed by the following entries in his Journal dated April 8, 1772 (Cox 1940): "Stopping at Mrs. Withey's in Chester to feed myself and my horse, I inquired about preaching in that house and found this to be the house where Mr. B and Mr. P. put up; and that the people were pleased with Methodist preaching." Mrs. Withey, according to Bishop Asbury, kept "one of the most complete houses of entertainment in America." According to Cox, she warmly welcomed the Methodist circuit riders and was most generous in their support and that of their struggling constituents.

Indeed, Asbury returned to preach in Chester on other occasions as another entry (June 8, 1800) in his Journal states: "On Saturday we dined with Mary Withey, now raised above her doubts and rejoicing in God. Through her instrumentality a small Society of Methodists is raised in Chester and she hath fed the Lord's prophets the last 28 or 29 years."

As early as 1774 the name "Chester" appears in the minutes of the Philadelphia Conference when Daniel Ruff and J. Yearly were appointed to the Chester Circuit. The territory covered by circuit riders extended from the Delaware river nearly to the Susquehanna river and from Philadelphia County to the Maryland line.

The John Kelly family from Old St. George's Church in Philadelphia (Established 1767) was instrumental in the start of the Methodist preaching in Chester. Kelly was a convert of Asbury and became a local preacher at St. George's Church. Upon moving to Chester, he and his wife organized a "class meeting" in their home on Market street near Second and soon

afterward Chester became established as a regular preaching station on the Methodist circuit. As a result, the Chester Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1818. The earliest records in Christ Church's archives begin with a book of Quarterly Conference records dated 1849. The church prospered and grew both in membership and in fervor. The congregation outgrew the Kelly home and in 1831 at Filbert (Second) and Bevan Streets the "Asbury Chapel" was built. In 1846 the Asbury Chapel was incorporated as "The Chester Methodist Episcopal Church of the County of Delaware." The congregation exceeded the capacity of the Chapel and in 1846 a new stone church was built on Fifth Street between Market Street and Edgmont Avenue. It was from this Fifth Street Church that Methodist congregations began to spread to other locations in Chester and surrounding communities. Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church was one such congregation that became established at Third and Parker Streets in Chester in 1865.

During the Winter of 1865, a number of persons, mostly members of Trinity Methodist Church, met at the home of Mr. William Gallow, Fifth Street and Central Avenue, and organized a Sunday School. Mr. Gallow was elected Superintendent. The following year, the Sunday School was given the use of the public school building at Third and Jeffrey Streets in the old Borough of South Chester. As early as August 9, 1867, the nucleus of a new congregation under the supervision of Reverend Isaac Most, pastor of Trinity Methodist Church. Classes and prayer meetings were held in homes under the leadership of Mr. B.F. Smith, and that there were many revival meetings and a number of conversions during this period.

In 1871 there was a strong sentiment for a new church, and about that time Colonel N.L. Yarnall, who was a member of the Madison Street Church, drew his letter and placed it in Trinity Methodist Church so that he might assist in this new work. He soon secured a lot at Third and Jeffrey Streets from Mr. John M. Broomall for \$100 and the lot was deeded to the Trustees of South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church. The Chester times captured the spirit of the finding of the lot on which to build the new church in an August 30, 1898 article repeated in 1973 in "75 Years Ago":

The people who saw the beginning of the movement that led to the organization of the South Chester Methodist Church are now few in number and among them is Samuel A. Montgomery, the well-known contractor and builder, who has long resided in the part of Chester known as the Ninth Ward.

Mr. Montgomery, then in the vigor of young manhood, was real estate agent for the Hon. John M. Broomall and disposed of much of the property in the rising borough west of the Lamokin. The Methodists "few in number, then worshiped in a small frame building at Third and Jeffrey Streets and one day while Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Broomall were standing on the opposite corner, where Coppock's store is now located, the former suggested that the lawyer ought to donate a site for a church to the Methodists.

Mr. Broomall pondered a moment or two, then said he would sell the lot 100 feet-for \$100. Mr. Montgomery immediately hunted up Colonel N.L. Yarnall, a leader among the Methodists, the money was immediately raised, the deed drawn and the property on

which a handsome edifice now stands passed into the possession of the church people.

A chapel was built and dedicated November 24, 1871. The following spring Reverend S.W. Gehrett was appointed pastor. On May 27, 1872, the first Quarterly Conference was held and the church was formally organized with the following officers:

Trustees

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Henry Bartow | William Fow | John McDowell |
| James Byram | M.D. Gray | James McGuinness |
| Thomas Clayton | John Marshall | N.L. Yarnall |

Local Preachers

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Clark Watson | N.L. Yarnall |
|--------------|--------------|

Stewards

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| A.H. Buckley | C. Watson |
| M.D. Gray | N.L. Yarnall |
| John McDowell | Henry Young |
| W.K. McBride | |

On April 28, 1875, a charter was granted by the County Board. Then, in 1886, during the pastorate of Reverend I.M. Gable, the brick chapel was carried back a distance of 200 feet and the corner stone for the present church was laid. The church was formally dedicated in 1887.

For many years the church structure remained the same. In October, 1946, during the pastorate of Reverend J.G. Eaton, the church steeple, which had become a landmark in South Chester, was removed and a bronze cross erected. In 1952, under the pastorate of Rev. Ellsworth Jennings, the cross was painted white and lighted so that it could be seen a considerable distance.

In 1962, travelers on Dutton's Mill Road in Brookhaven would have seen a sign reading "On this site will be erected a METHODIST CHURCH the new home of the South Chester Methodist Church. It marked the site of a 7 acre tract of land including the present parsonage that was purchased by the Conference Board of Missions. By March 1965 the building site was cleared of trees, and on April 18, 1965, a large gathering of church members participated in the Groundbreaking Service under the direction of Reverend Ellsworth L. Jennings, Pastor of the church, with the Rev. Dr. John D. Herr, District Superintendent of the South District of the Philadelphia Conference in attendance. Also representing the Conference was Rev. Dr. Paul W. Poley, of the Board of Church Extensions. Local Church officials participating in the service were Mrs. Frances Spiegel, Cultivations Superintendent of the Sunday School; Mrs. Annie Ashby, oldest active member of the church; Mr. William Szlemko, Chairman of the Building Committee; Mrs. Katheryn Hause, President of the Woman's Society of Christian Service; Mr. Raymond Robinson, Lay Leader; and Mr. William Spicer, President of the Board of Trustees.

By June 5th the site had been leveled, surveyed and staked, and by July 4th, 1965, the sanctuary beams were in place and the block and brick of the fellowship hall and classrooms was rising. In August the building was under roof and the steeple was in place by late August as reported by the Chester Times of August 28, 1965:

The steeple was erected this week on the new building of South Chester Methodist Church, presently under construction on Dutton Mill road. The 31-foot steeple rises from a square base on the ridge of the roof. A five-foot belfry section, diamond in shape with aluminum louvers on the four sides supports a 23-foot spire and cross. The interior section of structural steel, is anchored to the roof. The exterior is one-eighth aluminum with white vinyl finish and the Latin cross has been treated with a gold anodized finish. The congregation hopes to occupy the building by the middle of October, according to Rev. Ellsworth L. Jennings, Pastor.

Throughout the Fall of 1965, the interior appointments were put into place, though the completion of the construction took longer than anticipated and it was not until January 23rd, 1965 that the last service was scheduled at "Old South Chester". As luck would have it, that service was "snowed out," and the next Sunday, February 6, 1965, marked the first service at our present location. Sunday School was held at 9:45 AM and the worship service at 11:00 AM, conducted by Rev. Jennings. On Sunday, September 18th, 1966, Bishop Fred Pierce Corson consecrated the new church. Fund raising continued and through many generous gifts the fifteen-year mortgage was satisfied in just two and one-half years. On November 24, 1968, Bishop J. Gordon Howell, Rev. Walter R. Hazzard, South District Superintendent, and Rev. Ellsworth Jennings led the service of dedication and official burning of the mortgage.

Reverend Jennings continued his ministry at Christ United Methodist Church until his retirement on October 31, 1971. He had served 23 years as pastor at South Chester and Christ Church and a total of 41 years as an ordained minister in the Methodist Church. Reverend Howard K. Vassallo was appointed interim pastor and was appointed pastor at the next Annual Conference. Rev. Vassallo served Christ Church for the next twelve years.

On June 19, 1983 the congregation at Madison Street United Methodist Church merged with Christ Church bringing together many friends in the new suburban location. The ceremony was formalized with the signing of the merger document by John Bullock and M. Francis Cullis representing Madison Street and Joseph Pitale and June Picciano representing Christ Church.

On July 10, 1983, Reverend Guy L. Kessler began his pastorate at Christ Church and continues to faithfully serve our congregation ably assisted by his wife Nancy. 2001 marks the 18th year of Rev. Kessler's pastorate. The year 1995 marked a second "joining" of our congregation. With the closing of Providence Avenue Church, ninety-four members of the congregation chose to join Christ Church by letter of transfer. Throughout our thirty five years at our present location the congregation has been bulwarked by the traditions of our parent congregations and enhanced by many new members from the Brookhaven community who have joined in the ministry of Christ Church. We look forward to many more years in God's service at 600 Dutton Mill Road.

Christ Church maintains its heritage as a "Mission Church" through outreach locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. The congregation supports the Conference designated ministries including Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, Native American

Awareness Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday, World Communion Sunday and United Methodist Student Day. In recent years the church has supported additional missions including the District Superintendent's Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic, Operation Christmas Child, The Heifer Project, Society of St. Andrews, UNICEF, Salvation Army, City Team Ministries, Eastside Ministries, Red Bird Mission, support for our sister congregation in India, Cristo Rey Latino Congregation, participation in work teams to Russian orphanages, and Kids in Mission work with special needs campers of Camp Innabah, the members of Christ Church, the youth and adults, continue the work of the Saints of Old South Chester, Madison Street, and Providence Avenue congregations. The Church is its people. Buildings were raised, moved, enlarged, sold or transferred. Through God's grace, Old South Chester became Community Church and most recently, The New Jerusalem Church. Madison Street continues as The Wesley House, a homeless shelter, and Providence Avenue as Asbury African Methodist Episcopal Church. New congregations now worship God from these locations. Our congregation remains strong and ministers in Jesus' name. May God continue to bless us in the years ahead.

Madison Street Methodist Church A Brief History by Mabel Talley

(On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of worship at the 7th and Madison Street location and 131 years of Service to Christ in Chester – 1949.)

Madison Street Methodist Church has been called the "Mother Church of Methodism in Chester." Its history is old and inspiring and is the direct outgrowth of the spread of Methodism which swept this section of the country prior to the American Revolution. Due to the powerful preaching of Bishop Francis Asbury who came to Chester on several occasions, a class meeting was formed in 1810, in the home of Mrs. Mary Withey who kept a house of public entertainment known as the Columbia House, located at what is now fifth and Market Streets. Mrs. Withey was the daughter of a British officer, and at her Inn entertained not only Bishop Asbury, but a number of the Bishop's Circuit riders.

David Abbott is another name we must associate with Methodism in Chester. Abbott was an evangelist who came from New Jersey, and was one of the exhorters of the early Chester prayer meetings which led to the formation of the Methodist group which was to be known years later as our own Madison Street Church.

In 1818, there moved to Chester from Philadelphia, a certain Thomas Kelly and his wife, Esther. The Kellys were members of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, and Thomas was a local preacher there. Naturally, these were churchgoing folk who looked in vain, in Chester, for any organized Methodist Church. A 15 mile journey to Philadelphia on the Sabbath was not to be thought of in that day of slow transportation. Across the street from where the Kelley's lived at High and Filbert streets (Now High Street at Second) was a Friends Meeting and on James Street, now Third stood St. Paul's Episcopal Church, but neither were of the Kelley's denomination. Nothing daunted, and seeing the real need, as strangers to a town often do, these Philadelphians, with the encouragement of some good neighbors, decided very soon after their arrival to open their own house, on Sundays for worship.

This Methodist congregation grew so rapidly that the Kelly home could no longer accommodate them. It is said that Sunday services were then held in the Court House-still standing. Even room in this building in time proved inadequate, and it became evident that a place of worship—a small church—must be erected. Chester at that time had a population of only 1500; to raise sufficient funds to build a church was indeed a difficult task.

But with willing spirit and determined effort this little band of devoted Methodists saw their prayers answered, and their efforts rewarded, for on October 18, 1831, Matthew L. Bevan conveyed a lot to the seven trustees, for a piece of ground 66 feet on Filbert Street (now Second) by 98 feet on Bevan St. (now Bethel Court), for the sum of \$150.00.

In the same year through great effort, sacrifice, and devotion, a small chapel was erected and named Asbury Chapel, in honor of the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

At first there was no regular minister appointed for Asbury Chapel, and the Chester congregation depended upon circuit riders to preach to them. However, in 1845, the increase of the membership to 65 seemed to the Philadelphia Conference to warrant the appointment of a resident pastor, and the Rev. Isaac R. Merrill was sent. Merrill was so successful in his pastorate with sweeping revivals, that the chapel was soon outgrown, and plans for another and large edifice were started.

The Rev. Mr. Merrill had been pastor of Asbury Chapel only one year when on June 1, 1846, Dr. William Gray conveyed to the nine trustees of the “Chester Methodist Episcopal Church” a plot of ground on the north side of Fifth Street between Market and Edgmont Avenue. ON this ground in 1848 was erected a stone church, not unlike our present Madison Street Church. This building was used until 1874; but in 1872 another lot was procured, looking forward to the time when an uptown church would be needed. This lot was donated by Edward C. Smith, and was located on the northeast corner of Seventh and Madison Streets, “in trust that the said premises shall be used, kept, maintained and disposed of as a place of Divine Worship and place of residence, either or both, for the use of the Ministry and Membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of America.”

Wednesday evening, July 17, 1872 the cornerstone was laid for a \$50,000 green serpentine stone church on the ground donated for that purpose. At the time of the laying of the cornerstone, the pastor of the Fifth Street Church was Rev. James Cunningham.

On Sunday, May 3, 1874, the new church was dedicated and opened for Divine Service. The first pastor of the new church was the Rev. John B.V. Maddux, and the membership numbered 302. The name “Chester Methodist Episcopal Church of the County of Delaware”, was changed, by application to the Court, to that of Madison Street Methodist Episcopal Church. It was during the pastorate of the Rev. J.B. Maddux, 1872 to 1875, that the entire indebtedness of both church and parsonage was paid off.

From the Conference Minutes of Chester District (now South District), 1874, we learn that the congregation also built a Mission Church of stone at Upland, at a cost of \$3,000, the lot having been presented by John M. Maris and Brother, of Philadelphia.

Women have always shared in church work and backed every effort of the men for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom.

It was in the Fifth Street Church that the Ladies' Aid was organized through the efforts of Mrs. William I. Sharpless. The parsonage, which was around the corner on Edgmont Avenue, was greatly in need of furnishings. Mrs. Sharpless felt that this work must devolve upon the women. Following the example of the Frankford Methodist Church of Philadelphia, which she attended while on a visit to the city, she brought back to the Methodist congregation in Chester the idea of the Ladies' Aid. Once organized, the Fifth Street ladies at once proceeded to purchase a carpet for the parsonage. And so the work went on.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized in 1885, with Mrs. Theodore Hayatt as President; 1st Vice-President, Mrs. William C. Robinson; 2nd Vice President, Mrs. R. Kelso Carter, to be succeeded in office, shortly afterward by Miss Adaline Van Zant.

The Home Missionary Society was also organized in 1885, with Mrs. Theodore Stevens, wife of the pastor, as President. Miss Van Zant was Vice-President, and when the pastorate of the Rev. Stevens was ended at the church, "Miss Addie" (as Miss Van Zant was affectionately called) stepped up to the presidency which office she filled until her death, twenty-two years later.

The young women of the Church were also organized into Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, and the girls and boys helped the missionary work through the Standard Bearers and the Junior Standard Bearers.

All these Missionary Societies, together with the Ladies' Aid, were merged by order of the General Conference in 1940, and became known as the Woman's Society of Christian Service. The books of the old societies were closed, and their presidents, after long and faithful service, stepped out to make way for the new set-up. These retiring presidents are lovingly and reverently remembers: Mrs. William Provost, Jr., for thirty years the president of the Ladies' Aid; Miss Margaret Sands, also for thirty years the president of the Women's Home Missionary Society; and Mrs. Elmer G. Dutton as president of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society for many years.

Mrs. Anna B. Howland who brought up the children of the church to be mission-minded, was another leader we should remember and honor. "A woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised, let her own works praise her in the gates."

We must not forget, or overlook the men. The Brotherhood of Andrew and Phillip was, in the late 1890's, and active organization, as was also the Usher's Association. Through the efforts of the Ushers the glass-paneled doors now used at the entrance to the auditorium were installed, replacing the former solid wooden doors.

In the 1890's the Church activities reached a high peak. The young people enjoyed their Epworth Leagues, both Senior and Junior. The Sunday School flourished, with attendance as high as 700. At that time the Sunday School paid for its own organist, as well as its chorister. A few years later the Sunday School took up a collection and purchased a Baby Grand piano, which is still in use upstairs in the church auditorium.

We also find reference to a Sunday School Library, with John F. Cullis as librarian. The Books, now obsolete, and no longer used, are still in the archives of the church.

The history of Madison Street Church has not half been told; it cannot be in a limited space. We touch the highlights here and there, and those whose leadership comes to mind. The years inevitably bring changes, but the work, despite mergers and new set-ups, goes on. As we turn the leaves of our BOOK OF MEMORIES, we see how the Torch, once lighted so long ago, has been passed on from hand to hand, down through the years. Let us, of the present day, see to it that the light, as it passes through our hands, neither flickers nor dies.

Providence Avenue United Methodist Church

The history of Providence Avenue United Methodist Church has its origins in the Madison Street Methodist Episcopal Church. The growth of the Madison Street Church followed the growth of the City of Chester and due to greatly increased attendance, there was a need to establish additional congregations, of which Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1865 during the "Second Era of Expansion (1856-1873). Trinity Church was then located at Third and Parker Streets, and in 1921 relocated to its present location at 8th and Butler Streets. South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church, predecessor to Christ Church also grew out of the early establishment of Trinity Church in 1865 with its edifice being erected by this society in 1871 at 3rd and Jeffrey Streets, in the South Chester Borough.

Madison Street Church continued to serve as the parent church as a third congregation was raised by members who were living in what was, in 1883, known as North Chester. IN that year as one early history recounts, "the spirit of God moved upon the hearts of a few men and women, members of Madison Street Methodist Episcopal Church... And revealed to them the need of a Methodist Church in that community." Class #15 was established by Rev. Theodore Stevens who appointed Joseph O. Wilson as class leader. Early prayer services of members of Class 15 were held in the member's homes and although their numbers at first were few their 'zeal was great." Later as the numbers increased services were held in the North Chester Borough Hall at 18th Street west of Providence Avenue. The first public service was held on Sunday evening, October 11, 1885 with Rev. Peter Hunter preaching. Services were held there until the building of the Chapel. In the summer of 1886 a plot of land was selected and purchased at 18th Street and Providence Avenue. The cornerstone was laid August 25th, 1887, and the services were conducted by the Rev. William Swindells, Presiding Elder of the South Philadelphia District. The ministers present were William J. Paxon, Henry E. Gilroy, and Lewis A. Parsells. The building was dedicated free of debt on January 8th, 1888. The ministers present were William Swindells, William M. Ridgway, and N.B. Darell. Rev. W.J. Paxon, who had the

honor of naming the church, was unable to be present owing to an injury of the hand, which occurred in connection with the superintendence of the work on the building.

At the Annual Conference of 1888, Bishop John S. Hurst appointed the Rev. Franklin M. Welsh as Junior pastor of Madison Street Church and Providence Avenue Church. The first sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Welsh, Sunday morning, March 15, 1888. A board of trustees of the new Church was organized July 19, 1888, and consisted of D. Reese Esray, John N. Wilson, William S. Blakley, Joseph S. Hunter, Samuel Greenwood, and Joseph O. Wilson. Mr. Wilson was also the first Sunday School Superintendent.

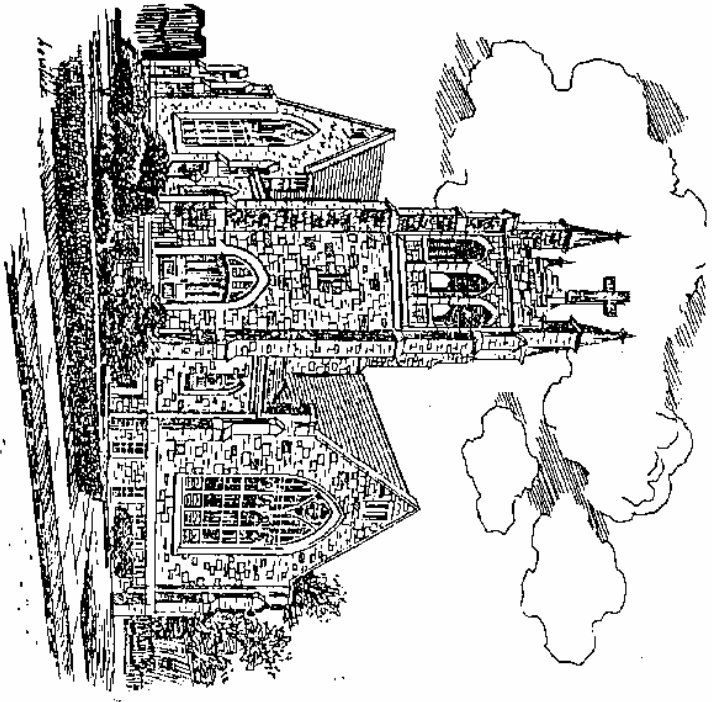
The Church was made an independent charge by the Annual Conference of 1890, and the Rev. D.S. Sherry was appointed as the first regular pastor. The first quarterly conference was held April 15, 1890, with the Rev. Thomas B. Neely presiding. The establishment of Providence Avenue as a new congregation was in the "Third Era of Expansion (1874-1895)."

During the pastorate of Rev. D.L. McCartney, a brick parsonage was built on the lot next to the church on 18th Street. During the pastorate of the Rev. Frank J. Andrus a building committee was appointed and plans approved for the first unit of a new church. Ground was broken in 1914 and the service for the cornerstone laying was held October 1, 1916. The new gray stone church edifice was completed in the spring of 1917 and the dedication was held Sunday, May 20, 1917.

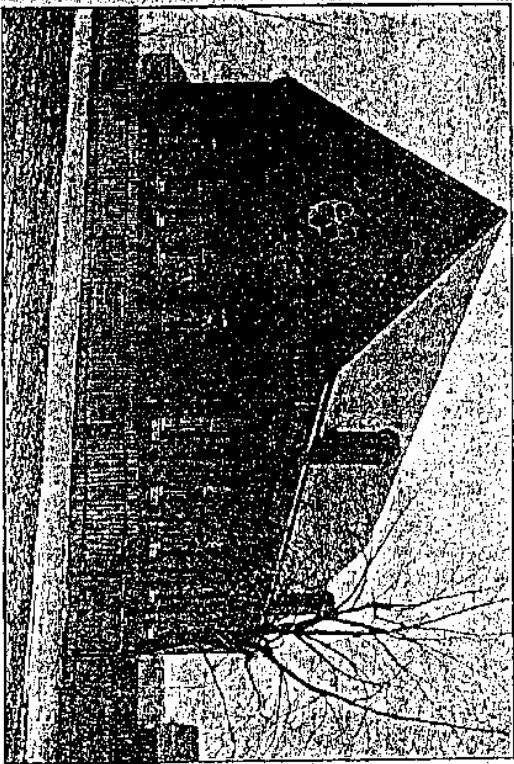
In 1953 the education wing was added to the church. The congregation at that time numbered approximately 800. Chester was at that time a prosperous industrial city with a large lighted sign shining over the Delaware River greeting travelers from New Jersey proudly announcing "hat Chester Makes, Makes Chester." The next 40 years, however, saw a decline in the prosperity of Chester and of its population. Throughout the Philadelphia Conference there had begun the "Era of Consolidation (1896 to the present)." In 1983 Madison Street merged with Christ Church. With much sadness, the Providence Avenue Church was closed in June 1994, its members relocating to surrounding Methodist congregations including Trinity, Mt. Hope, Ridley Park and Christ Church, 94 members from Providence Avenue joining with the latter congregation.

The efforts of the Providence Avenue congregation over the years to erect and maintain the building as a house of worship in which to praise God and do His work continued even as plans to close the church were being made. Rev. Wesley K. Meixell was instrumental in ensuring that another congregation was found to continue Christian life and service in the sanctuary and educational facilities. Asbury A.M.E., then located at 525 Concord Avenue, needed to replace its aging facilities in which their congregation had worshiped for the past 105 years. Arrangements were made for Asbury to purchase the Providence Avenue Church. Thus, on March 17, 1995, to the Glory of God and with thanksgiving by members of both congregations, the March-In and Dedication Services were held with Bishop Philip R. Cousin of the Delaware Conference Presiding.

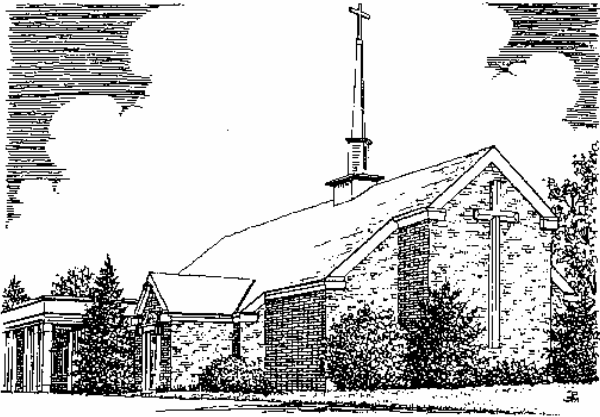
The Christian work and fellowship by the peoples known as Methodist, begun in Philadelphia at Old St. George's in 1767 continues today at 18th and Providence Avenue and in the Methodist congregations of surrounding communities. Praise be to Almighty God, from whom all blessings flow, forevermore!



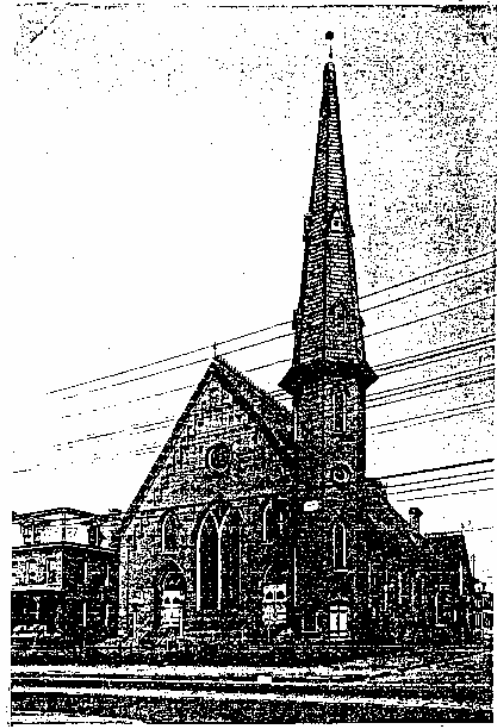
Providence Avenue United Methodist Church



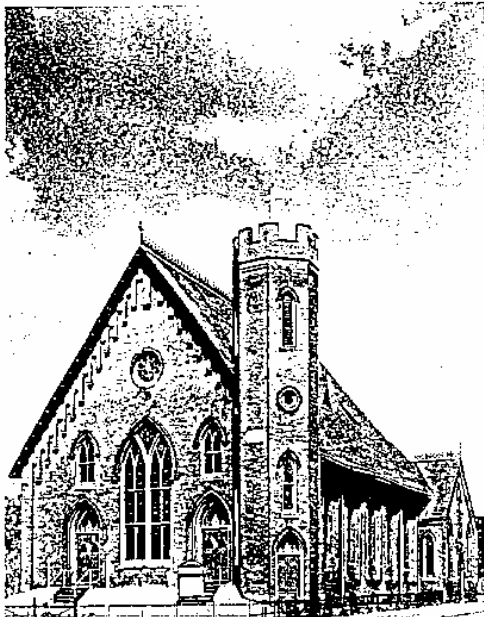
Providence Avenue M. E. Church
Chester, Pa.



Christ United Methodist Church



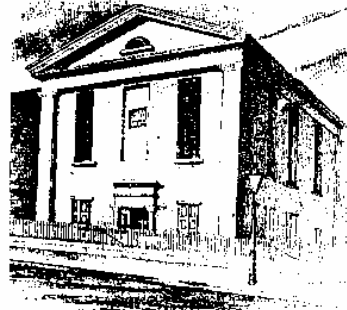
South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church
(Pre-1946 with original steeple intact)



SOUTH CHESTER METHODIST CHURCH
Chester, Pennsylvania

OLD HOME DAY

Sunday, October 19th, 1941



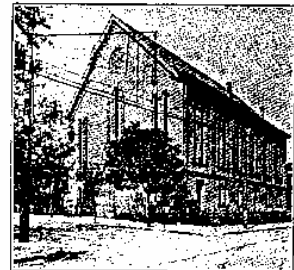
THE
OLD
HOME

1846
to
1874

Madison Street Methodist Church
MADISON STREET AT SEVENTH, CHESTER, PA.

REV. J. PERRY COX
Minister
723 Madison Street

Telephones:
Home—Chester 3988
Church Office—
Chester 3-2611



OUR PRESENT HOME

Bibliography

The author gratefully acknowledges the work of the named and anonymous sources which were used in the preparation of this brief compilation of the histories of Christ Church, Madison Street Church and the Providence Avenue Church.

Booth, Frances. (n.d.). **South Chester Methodist Church, Third and Jeffrey Streets, Chester, PA. History of Church.**

Brief History of the South Chester Methodist Church (n.d.)

Chester Times (Chester PA) August 30, 1898 article repeated in 1973 in "75 Years Ago": [Purchase of the lot at Third and Jeffrey Streets for the South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church.]

Chester Times (Chester PA) August 28, 1965 [Placing of the Steeple on Christ United Methodist Church.]

Cox, Henry B. (1940). **The History of the Madison Street Methodist Church of Chester, Pennsylvania: 1772 – 1940.** [Cox was the son of the minister Rev. J. Perry Cox.]

Cullis, Harry W. (n.d.) **History of Madison Street United Methodist Church.** [Written post 1949 as Cullis references Talley's 1949 history of the church.]

Delaware County Republican (Chester PA). (1872). [transcript of article on the laying of the corner stone of Madison Street Methodist Church. Friday, July 19, 1872.]

Delaware County Republican (Chester, PA) (1874). [transcript of article on the dedication of the Madison Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Friday, May 8, 1874.]

Koch, Harold. (1968) **The Leaven of the Kingdom: The Amazing Growth of Methodism in the Philadelphia Conference 1767 – 1968.**

Providence Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church History (1936).

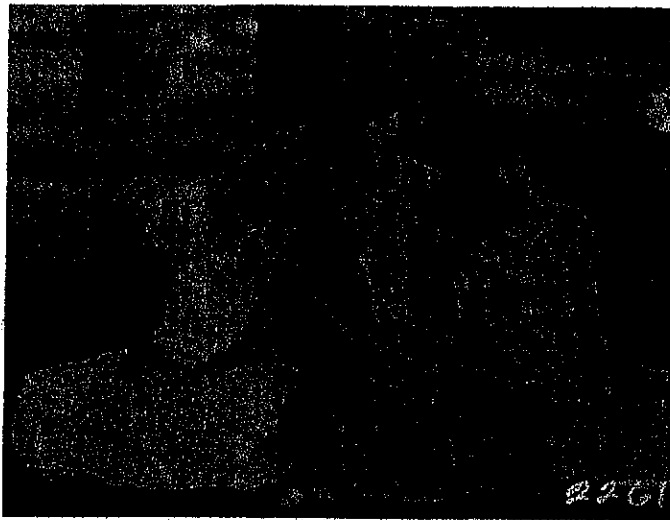
Talley, Mabel. (1949). **A Brief History of Madison Street Methodist Church 1874 – 1949.**

Today we meet to worship Almighty God and celebrate the 130th anniversary of the founding of the South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church and the 35th year at our present location. We are mindful of the great tragedy that afflicted our country in the terroristic destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City, and the attack upon the Pentagon in Washington, DC on Tuesday, September 11th. Our celebration is tempered as we set aside this day as a day of prayer, fasting and reflection. We pray for those lost and injured, for their families and for all those working so diligently at these disaster sites. May God's wisdom guide our Nation's leaders in these most difficult times, and may God's love and peace be upon us all.

Dennis H. Bartow
Church Historian/Archivist

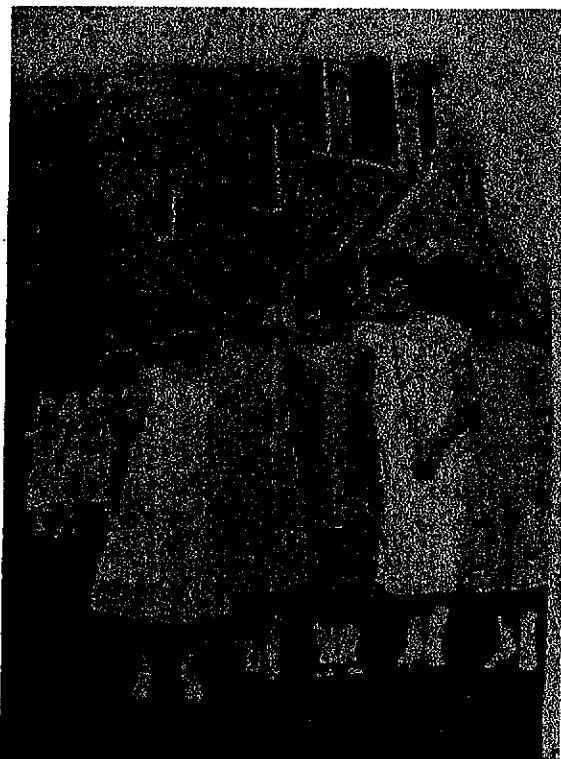
The Epworth League

Youth ministry has long been a part of the Methodist Church and our congregation. The following is a brief look at the Epworth League in America. Unfortunately few local records survive relating to the League from South Chester, Madison Street or Providence Avenue Churches. In family pictures I came across a picture of Frances (Shoop) Gates, Elva (Thomas) Ward and May (Shoop) Palmatary in Sunday attire sitting under a tree. On the reverse Fran Gates had written "Albright College, Reading, PA."



[L-R: Frances Shoop, Elva Thomas, & May Shoop]

A second picture has recently come to light on which was written "Epworth League Institute" and the girls pictured were dressed the same as the first picture. These pictures date back to the early 1920's.

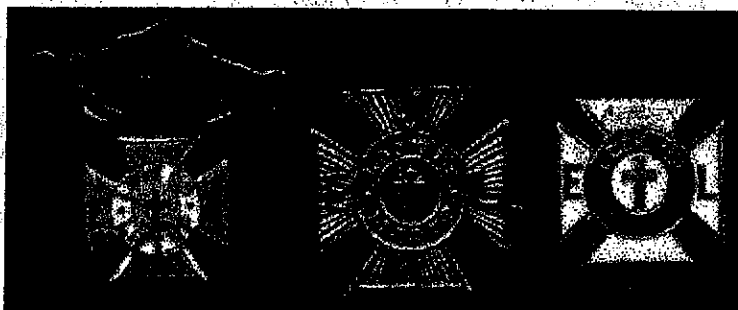


[Left-Fran Shoop, Middle - Elva Thomas, Right - May Shoop]

At South Chester Methodist Episcopal Church the youth were engaged in Sunday School Classes, church league sports, and Circles, especially the Queen Esther Circle (Circle #3). As evidenced by these pictures they also were members of the Epworth League. The girls developed life-long friendships through these Circle and League activities .

Brief Description of the Founding of the Epworth League in America

In the Methodist Church in America, preceding our current United Methodist Youth Fellowship there were a number of other youth organizations specific to Methodist Conferences and individual churches. In 1889 there were as many as five youth organizations including the Methodist Alliance with 20,000 members in 1883, the Oxford League, and the Young People's Christian League. There was competition between youth organizations for participation of the youth. So serious was this competition that discussions were held regarding merging into a single organization. In 1889, 27 individuals met at the Central Methodist Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Ohio and formed the Epworth League, adopting its name after the Epworth Rectory, boyhood home of the John and Charles Wesley in England. The group adopted a constitution based on that of the Oxford League. From the Young People's Christian League's motto "Look Up, Lift Up," was adopted. The motto was emblazoned on League pins.



League Pins showing the Epworth League Motto (1)

From this beginning, the League spread world-wide and organized its social service activities into six departments: Spiritual Life, Social Work, Literary work, Correspondence, mercy and Help, and Finance. Local chapters organized Fresh Air Work (Day camps for city children), literary events, lecture series and fellowship gatherings.

When Central Methodist Church was renamed Epworth Memorial Church in 1891, Epworth League chapters across the country contributed 6 panels of stained glass to the church. (Epworth Memorial later became a part of Epworth-Euclid Methodist Church.

The Epworth League was very popular and membership grew phenomenally. For example, in the Texas Conference, the League was adopted in 1892 and by 1896 there were 10,000 members in the Texas Conference(4). The League complemented the work of Sunday school programs, usually meeting on Sunday Evenings. There was a Junior division for younger children. Members of the League in our congregation also were members of circles such as Circle #3 – the Queen Esther Circle.

After denominational mergers among Methodists in the 1930s, the Epworth League became known as the Methodist Youth Fellowship. As the Methodist Church joined with the United Brethren Church, it became the United Methodist Youth Fellowship, known in our congregation as the MYF (2,3).



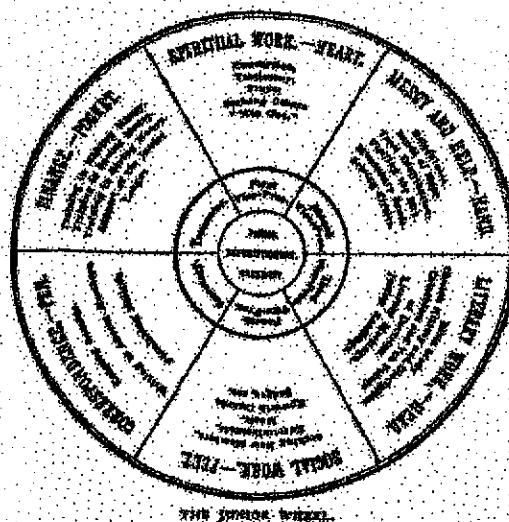
THE EPWORTH RECTORY.



THE EPWORTH MEMORIAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
CLEVELAND, O.

Above: The Epworth Rectory, the boyhood home of the Wesleys. Below, The Epworth Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church pictured in 1893(4)

version of the children is the chief aim of every Junior superintendent. After there is evidence that the child has accepted the Saviour there should follow plain teaching in Christian doctrine and instruction in practical



religious duties. The children are urged to take part in their own devotional meetings. They are encouraged to testify and lead in short, simple prayers. Besides, they are shown how to bring their young friends to the Master.

Unity Call - Digitized by Microsoft

[The work of the League (4)]

Sources and Links:

1. Phoenixmasonry.org obtained 27 October 2007 from the World Wide Web at http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/fraternalism/epworth_league.htm
2. *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* obtained 27 October 2007 from the World Wide Web at: <http://ech.case.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=EL>
3. Berry, Joseph Flinfol. 1893. *Four wonderful years: a sketch of the origin, growth, and working plans of the Epworth League*. New York: Hunt & Eaton. Obtained from the World Wide Web at: <http://www.openlibrary.org/details/fourwonderfulea00berrial>
4. Walter N. Vernon et al., *The Methodist Excitement in Texas* (Dallas: Texas United Methodist Historical Society, 1984). Obtained 27 Oct 2007 from the world wide web at : <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/EE/ixe1.html>

Editor's Note: Do you have any recollections of the Epworth League that you could share in a future issue of *The Trumpet*? Send any pictures or stories to me c/o Christ United Methodist Church Office, 600 Dutton Mill Road, Brookhaven, Pa. 19015 or call me at 610-675-5026(cell).

Dennis Bartow