



Ahoskie United Methodist Church

Ahoskie United Methodist Church members have used this building at 212 W. Church St. since 1927. Rev. Dr. Ken Hall is

the pastor. The church evolved from Sunday school meetings at the turn of the century.

United Methodist Church flourishes after beginning as a Sunday school

By Carolyn Brett Mitchell
Ahoskie United Methodist Church

In late 1897 or early 1898, several Methodist families in Ahoskie began attending a Sunday school organized by Mrs. B.G. Williams.

The small group met in a second-floor room of a store where Whedbee-White Co. stood on Main Street in 1939.

After Mrs. Williams moved, the Sunday School was reorganized by Mrs. B.C. Thompson, wife of the Harrellsville Methodist minister, who took charge in 1901.

Later in the year, 19 members of the Union Methodist Church moved their memberships to the new Ahoskie Methodist Church, organized Nov. 8, 1901. The Rev. B.C. Thompson of the Harrellsville Church was the first minister.

The charter members were Affa Garrett, A.E. Garrett, Emma L. Downs, Mary Ellen Baker, Rosa H. Mitchell, R.S. Baker, Rosa Baker, Lilly V. Thompson, Nina Hayes, Minnie Baker, Nelie Baker, Ernest Hayes, D. Percy Baker, George Baker, Eunice R. Baker, J. Archie Newsome, Addie Baker, Rosa L. Myers and William Myers.

Early in 1902, these new members were added — Joe M. Thompson, Henry W. Stokes, E.L. King, Stella Hayes Brett, Julian Paul Brett, Bertha Hayes, Emma C. Myers and Nina Williams.

First parsonage built

Plans for a parsonage were started, and the church members bought from Dr. Jesse H. Mitchell land on which to build the home which was completed in 1902. The new parsonage stood on the corner of Church and McGlohon, where the sanctuary building is today.

Then, finally, in 1904 behind the parsonage, a one-room wooden church was erected on the property facing a muddy Main Street, where Ahoskie Radiator and Glass now stands.

Much of the actual construction was completed by the minister and several church members. The Rev. Thompson preached his farewell sermon in the new church.

Years passed and the congregation grew. A larger meeting place was needed, and so the members built the new parsonage first and then the church. In 1924 the second parsonage, a brick two-story building, was completed on the site of the present parking lot.

New sanctuary opens

Then on Aug. 21, 1927, membership worshipped for the first time in the present sanctuary at the corner of Church and McGlohon streets. The day was one of great celebration, and the homecoming sermon was preached by the Rev. B.C. Thompson, the organizer of the church. After several years the finishing touches on the building were completed.

In the 1930's, names of two families are prominently mentioned. After serving as superintendent of Sunday school from 1907 to 1937, E.J. Gerock asked to be relieved of his duties. A faithful member, he also had been a steward and a trustee.

H.S. Basnight, in failing health,

requested that his family, including his son, W.H. Basnight, complete the furnishings of the sanctuary. To carry out their father's wishes, the adult children selected lovely carpet,

Ahoskie United Methodist Church building was opened in 1927 and once was called Basnight Memorial Methodist Church.

pews and pulpit furniture that the members enjoy today.

The Basnight family also contributed an electric organ and steeple chimes, because of their great generosity, the church during the 1940's and early 1950's was named the Basnight Memorial Methodist Church.

Name changed again
Then in 1968, because of the

merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the name became the Ahoskie United Methodist Church.

During the Rev. Nathan Byrd's ministry in the early 1970's, J. Hayes Brett was recognized for more than 40 years of service as secretary of the Sunday school.

The last decades have been growth years. In 1957, the classrooms and office building were opened. In 1963, the new parsonage on Pembroke Avenue was completed. In 1975, the first dinners were served in the Godwin Memorial Fellowship Hall, a lovely and useful addition made possible by the generosity of Mrs. Mamie Godwin. Then in January, 1982, Michael Paine, a professional musician, presented the first concert on the newly installed pipe organ.

From Mr. Thompson's first ministry to that of the present, Ahoskie Methodists have been blessed by their association with warm and talented ministers, musicians and teachers.

The preacher to occupy the pulpit the longest to date is the Rev. Robert Poulk from 1981-89.

Musical members

Robert and Forrestine Brown have blessed the church with music for the past 40 years, and the oldest member, who celebrated her 100th birthday on March 15, 1991, at the church, Mrs. Lil Boyette, is still known for her inspirational messages of wisdom.

Today the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Hall Sr. and his wife, Pat, are the new church family leading the church

(See METHODIST, Page 12B)

Josselson family has sold shoes for many years

Fashion Shoe Store at 128 E. Main St. has been serving Ahoskie and the Roanoke-Chowan area for more than half as long as the town has been officially recognized.

For nearly 70 years the store has been selling all kinds of footwear. Bill Josselson, who now operates the store, said the other day, "We sell anything for the feet, except bunions and corns."

His mother, Mrs. Lillian Josselson, operated the store in its early years until turning it over to her son in 1950.

Still, Mrs. Josselson, now 97 years old, likes to keep tabs on things. Her son pointed out that he may be well past 21 but his mother still likes to give her opinion on the business.

The store actually began in 1935 as a department of the old Fashion Shop. But within six months, the venture proved so successful that it was moved into its own building on Main Street. In 1948, the store was moved to its current location.

Mrs. Josselson got her start in business at the tender age of 12 at a Baltimore department store. She

applied for a job, telling the owner she was 18. When he found out the truth, she was fired.

"By this little escapade," she told *The News-Herald* in 1951, "you can see how eager I was to get into the business of selling."

Shortly after the incident, Mrs. Josselson's father moved the family to Ahoskie. When her father took a business trip, Lillian Feldman acted as his buyer and she met her future husband, Arthur Josselson.

Mr. Josselson was a retail merchant in Allendale, S.C., and she helped her husband run the store. They later moved to Spartanburg, S.C., where she was busy raising a family and he ran the business. In 1934, however, he was killed in an accident.

Anxious to return to work, Mrs. Josselson returned to Ahoskie to take over the shoe department of the Fashion Shop, which at the time was owned by her brother, Abe Feldman.

Until 1948, she ran the shoe department and then branched out on her own. In later years she served as bookkeeper.

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