

## A Brief History of Colonial Beach United Methodist Church

The Colonial Beach United Methodist Church and the corner lot that it sits on have a unique history and connection to three other churches in the Town of Colonial Beach. When the original survey of the Town of Colonial Beach was made in 1882 there were no organized churches in the town. Sometime between 1882 and 1887 a group composed of citizens of various religious faiths was formed, The Ladies Colonial Beach Union Chapel Association.

On November 14, 1887, by deed, John T. Given conveyed to William W. Curtis, Charles E. Brayton and John J. Gould trustees of the Association a parcel of ground identified as Lot 1, Block 75, Colonial Beach. The Association then entered into a contract with John B. Hammond to build a white frame church on the site of the present day Methodist Church. The church a twin tower edifice faced Boundary Street. One tower housed a bell that was cast in Washington DC in 1855. The bell is now part of the sign in front of this church. The church was used by the Chapel Association until each of the denominations was able to build a church of their own. 1892 worshipers in the newly chartered town of Colonial Beach met with other Christians at a joint place of worship known as the Union Chapel. Sunday services were conducted in successive weeks by the Reverends H. H. Fones, Baptist; Latane, Episcopalian; and James, Methodist. A joint service was conducted on the fourth Sunday of each month.

The Baptists started to worship in their own church in 1887, the Roman Catholics in 1906 and the Episcopalians in 1911. St. Mary's Episcopal Church at the corner of Washington and Dennison Street is the only one of the original churches still standing.

In November 1927, the Protestant Episcopal Church of Colonial Beach deeded its interest in the Chapel Association to the Methodist Episcopal Church South of Colonial Beach. The deed from the Roman Catholic Church could not be found and consequently The Circuit Court of Westmoreland County appointed W.T. Mayo, a Special Commissioner, to establish the true title holders of the property. In 1928 an order was entered declaring that for the past fifteen years the property had been exclusively used and occupied as a place of Divine Worship by the Colonial Beach Methodist Episcopal Church South; all other denominations originally represented in the Ladies Chapel Association having withdrawn therefrom and joined themselves with separate bodies. The order declared the property free of debt and/or claim.

In 1910 alterations were made to the Chapel to improve it. In the summer of 1947 the adjoining property containing the house called "Smiling Thru" was purchased. The building was then used primarily for church school and fellowship activities until it was badly damaged by fire in the late fall of 1949. It was demolished and the old Chapel was moved from the corner site to that of the "Smiling Thru" cottage. This was done to make space available for the erection of the new church building.

Work on this present sanctuary began in early 1951 and that summer the corner stone was laid by the Colonial Beach Masonic Lodge No. 199, F.A & F.M. Hard work by members of the congregation, made it possible for the early completion of the church.

The first worship service in the new church building was held on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1952 at 7:00 AM. This was a union service in which the members of the Baptist, Episcopal and Roman Catholic churches joined to help celebrate the occasion. The service was held by the original four denominations of the Ladies Colonial Beach Union Chapel Association.

In January 1963, the original white frame Chapel was demolished to utilize the space and in December 1963 ground was broken for the construction of an addition to the sanctuary to be used as an educational building. It includes class rooms, fellowship hall and kitchen. In the 1980's a second floor was added to the Sunday school rooms as well as other additions to the fellowship hall and kitchen.

The court order issued in 1928, stated that the property had been used exclusively by the Methodist Episcopal Church South for the past fifteen years is clear indication the court recognized that the Church was a legal entity at least as early as 1913. This is supported by evidence that the first pastor who was appointed to this charge actually served and held pastorate from January, 1912 until November, 1913.

A report written by Mrs. Phoebe Marshall in March of 1925 carries the following heading and list of names:

Charter Members of the M. E. Church South, Colonial Beach Virginia 1908, Rev. R. G. James

T.P. Venable; C.W. Ford; H.W. B. Williams; Clem Wells; Mrs. Lizzie Wilkerson; Mrs. Emeline Wilkerson; Mrs. Robert Jackson; Mrs. Leah Venable; Mrs. Emma Ford; Mrs. Lillie Cox; Mrs. Eva Rowley; Mrs. Theo King; Mrs. Rosa Ninde; Miss Ethel Jones; Mrs. C. Brayton; Mrs. W. R. Tinkler; Mrs. P. T. Venable; Mrs. C. W. Ford; Mrs. Inscoc; Mrs. Viola Fewell.

An early Conference Report makes reference to an Epworth League Charter for the Church. This indicates that the Church was organized prior to 1909, which gives greater credence to the above list.

In August 2011 an earthquake and Hurricane Lee caused damage to the existing church with water damage to the second floor, treasurer's office, parlor and separation of the walls in the Sunday School Room. Repairs were completed in June 2012.

