

# History of Trinity United Methodist Church 1824-2009



York, South Carolina

Trinity United Methodist Church dates back almost to the beginning of the town of Yorkville, now York, which was laid out about 1786. However, it was not until 1849 that the town of Yorkville was incorporated with a population of eight hundred people.

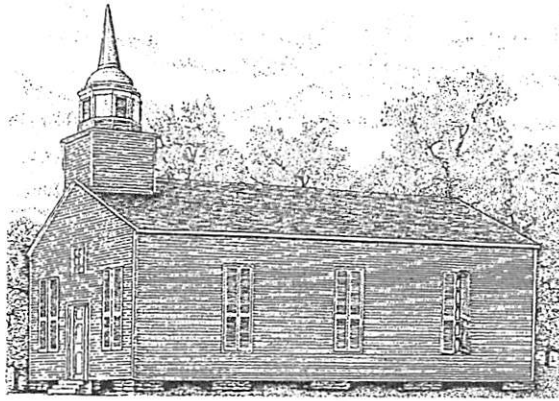
Yorkville's first Methodist Episcopal Church, Trinity, was organized in 1824 by Rev. William Gassaway who was the first Circuit Rider for the counties which include York. Rev. Gassaway served churches throughout South Carolina for 45 years and is buried near Tirzah, SC, on land given him by a Mr. James Fulton.

The first congregation consisted of nine members: James Jeffries, Mrs. Elizabeth H. Jeffries, Col. Thomas W. Williams, Dr. John E. Jennings, John Chambers, Mrs. Margaret Chambers, Mrs. Sarah Beaty, and Mrs. Tabitha Wilkerson. The following pages from Early Methodism in the Carolinas lists early ministers and the number of members in the charge:

No. Members.			
1828.	Joseph Holmes.....150	1855.	G. W. M. Creighton (Station).....87
1829.	Whitman C. Hill.....185	1856-57.	A. H. Lester.....124
1830.	Benjamin Bell.....220	1858.	O. A. Darby.....116
1831.	Stephen Williams.....221	1859-60.	L. A. Johnson.....130
1833.	James J. Richardson.....293	1861.	L. C. Weaver.....157
1834.	Josiah Freeman.....298	1862.	William S. Black.....
1835.	D. G. McDaniel.....278	1863.	J. W. Humbert.....
1839.	John Watta.....250	1864.	E. G. Craig.....
1837.	A. M. Forster.....257	1865.	L. A. Johnson.....
1838-39.	James W. Wellborn.....304	1866.	W. T. Capers.....87
1840.	J. G. Poethel.....301	1867-68.	J. S. Nelson, M. E. Hoyle (Circuit).....
1841.	S. Townsend.....341	1869.	J. A. Wood (Station, No report).....
1842.	C. S. Walker.....341	1870.	R. L. Harper.....91
1843.	P. G. Bowman.....372	1871.	O. M. Boyd.....
1844-45.	M. A. McKillen.....416	1872-73.	A. W. Walker.....155
1846.	John A. Porter.....355	1874.	D. D. Dantaler.....167
1847.	William C. Clark.....408	1875.	J. W. Dickson.....185
1848.	Abraham Nettles.....382	1876.	J. E. Curdile.....171
1849.	P. R. Hoyle.....387	1877.	W. S. Martin.....177
1850.	(Not on Minutes).....395	1878-80.	T. E. Gilbert.....149
1851.	L. M. Little.....377	1881.	M. Dargan.....120
1852.	E. J. Meynardo (Station).....60	1882-83.	R. P. Franks.....93
1853.	William P. Boone.....96	1884.	John A. Mead (Circuit).....90
1854.	J. W. North.....76	1885.	J. T. Pate.....139
		1886-89.	W. W. Daniel.....124
		1890.	G. H. Waddell.....

The first church building was built in 1826 on College Street, with a cemetery adjoining. The cemetery still remains on the site. A half-acre of land for the building of this meeting house was given by J.M. Harris. This church building was a plain wooden structure, directly opposite from the graded school building. It had an outside entry to the gallery where the slaves entered for worship. The first Quarterly Conference of the York Circuit was held in this building on April 30, 1831. Members present were: William M. Kennedy, presiding elder; Stephen Williams, preacher in charge; William Gassaway, local elder; James B. Fulton, exhorter; Alexander Hill, Sr.; exhorter; James Jeffries, law secretary. Also in attendance were Charles Wilson, Sr., Thomas William Nance, J. Dawson, and Peyton B. Darwin. As shown on the chart above, Trinity became a station church in 1852, but during the Civil War, the membership became scattered and reduced. The close of that war found the congregation too weak to continue as a separate charge, and were put on a charge with King's Mountain Chapel and Philadelphia Church. This Charge continued until 1885, when the church was again strong enough to be a station church.

Later, the church moved to two other buildings (on E. Jefferson St. and E. Liberty St.). The E. Liberty Street church was purchased in 1882. This building had formerly been occupied by the Independent Presbyterian Church and was located in front of Rose Hill Cemetery.

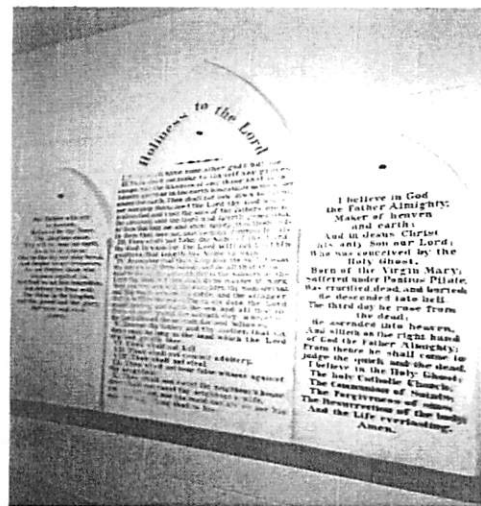


Plans for the present Trinity we made on April 6, 1887. Before that meeting adjourned, the subscription amounted to more than \$2500. The contract for the building was let on September 15, 1890. One of the charter members, Mrs. Elizabeth Jeffries, was alive at the time of the building of the latest Trinity Church. The building committee consisted of T.S. Jeffries, chairman, F. Happerfield, H.C. Strauss, Dr. John May, Jr., and J.W. Dobson. The church is constructed of brick, with granite trimmings, and in the Gothic style of architecture. The auditorium is left of the tower, while the Sunday School room (the annex) is to the right. The entrance is made by means of two sets of stone steps and lead into the vestibule. This vestibule occupies the base of the tower. It is twelve feet square, and the floor is laid with alternate squares of black and white marble. Including the spire, the tower is seventy-eight feet high. The auditorium is thirty by fifty-eight feet with the overhead ceiled in cherry and yellow pine panel work. The original pulpit (now located in the Benfield Classroom) is made of



walnut and ash and has an inlaid cross which the architect, Mr. Bonnewell sawed from the timbers of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

In 1960, an educational building was erected. At this time the Decalogue tablets, part of the original building, were cleaned and placed in the hall leading from the Sanctuary to the educational building.



In May of 1994, construction was begun on the Trinity Center, adding educational and recreational space. The center allows for multiple activities to take place, and is used for church and community activities. A new kitchen, an integral part of the center, is very well-equipped.



Trinity Sunday School has the distinction of being one of the three oldest such organizations in South Carolina (the other two being in Columbia). The Sunday School was organized March 3, 1829. The picture was taken of a Sunday School class sometime in the 1930's.



Since the existence of Trinity Church, the women have played an important role. The available records note that a Woman's Society was organized in 1886, later to add a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society which is still an important part of the church, offering spiritual, as well as, recreational activities for youth.

Today, Trinity UMC is a thriving, exciting hub of ministry. Members participate in many outreach opportunities: PATH, Tenderheart Ministry, Sudan Projects, UMYF, Children's activities, Habitat for Humanity, and Prison Ministry, to name a few. Trinity looks to the future as the church seeks out the lost through evangelism and a caring attitude toward the community.

