

Telling the Stories:

A History of Watts Street Baptist Church

Warner Ragsdale and Shirley Strobel



Seventy-fifth Anniversary
1923-1998

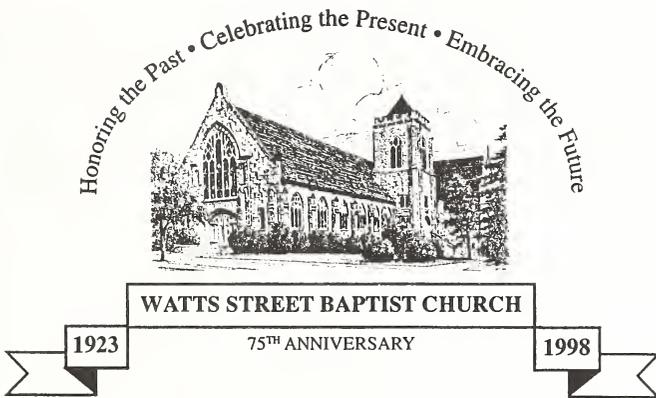


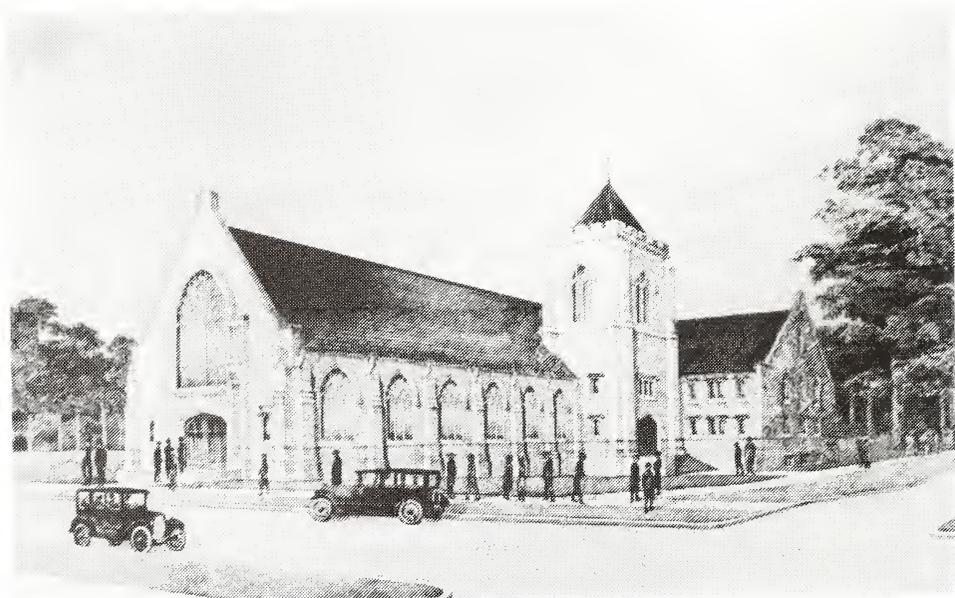
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**Architect's Drawing of
Watts Street Baptist Church, 1923**

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Preface

Watts Street Baptist Church was built, in 1924, on the edge of town, just inside the city limits, which were bounded by Buchanan Boulevard. And during its 75 years, the church has stayed “on the edge”—the cutting edge—a leader in the spiritual and secular affairs of Durham.

Within the Southern Baptist Convention and the City of Durham, Watts Street is known as a maverick church. It has strained relations with the Convention when it supported membership without immersion, and it has become aligned with northern Baptists, through the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., formerly, American Baptist Convention. Similarly, Watts Street was set apart from other Durham churches through its early acceptance of black participation in worship services.

Most churches are community churches, with the membership sharing neighborhoods, schools, income levels, and values. Watts Street, on the contrary, cuts across communities to include a diverse group of people who often differ markedly on questions of value; it once was, but is no longer, a church that belongs to a particular community. WSBC attempts to make a religious community where the college professor and the anti-intellectual, the businessman and the blue collar worker, are able to find each other in Christian comradeship and covenant ethics. It has not been easy to bring together these very different groups, with their different political agendas and social ideas. How has it been possible?

Watts Street people take seriously the Lovefeast. At Christmastime the church is packed for the two services of a

Moravian Lovefeast. Yet once a month the church celebrates communion, another love feast, a service that reaches across differences to draw communicants into the Body of Christ. At the communion table, church members find common ground during their Lovefeast, in the love of God, in God's self giving for humans. That experience leads church members to love each other in spite of their differences. That is the reason they stand up for Watts Street Church against any outside challenger, even though they may argue ferociously at church meetings.

As the Body of Christ, members of Watts Street see that Jesus' mission is their own. "The church exists for the sake of those who are not in it," Mel Williams likes to say. Watts Street is known in Durham as the church that begins local missions of charity and spins them off to others once they are well underway. Many, many unfortunate people in Durham have Watts Street to thank for their daily necessities, food, shelter, medical services, and friendship.

Watts Street Church has a wealth of talent. In 1998 there are 22 ordained ministers on the church rolls, many who attend services and participate in activities. Church-people are in leadership roles in the community. This was particularly evident in the 1960s when the work of bridging the racial gap and opening up hotel accommodations and restaurants to African Americans and getting businesses to hire blacks was, to a large degree, led by Watts Street members.

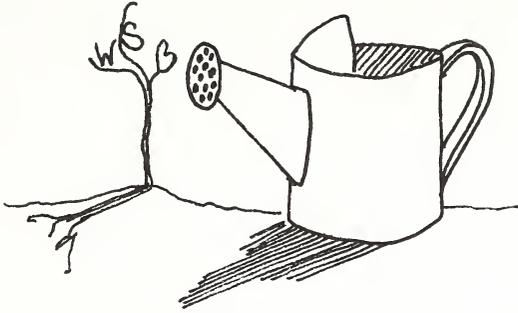
The writing of this history of Watts Street Baptist Church has been a collaboration. Warner Ragsdale, who spent his life as a reporter, working for *U.S. News and World Report* before he retired, gathered the materials for this book, talking with members and searching out documents. Before he had finished writing, he succumbed to Parkinson's dis-

ease and pneumonia. Two Sundays before he died, Warner asked me to help with the history. I have considered this task my legacy from him. In addition, John Cheek has long been considered the historian of Watts Street. His memories and the work he had done before Warner began have been invaluable. Twenty-five years ago Clark Cahow began a church history, which was never finished, yet his beginning was a good place to start for this work. Jim Drennan, who has long served on the Board of Mission, has provided valuable help by writing most of the chapter on missions, "From Evangelists to Good Neighbors." The rest of that chapter, the section on the W.M.U., was carefully researched by Gene Johnson. Dick Chorley has provided many answers to questions, responding energetically to every task. Emily Joiner's parallel work collecting photographs and articles for the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration has made her a particularly valuable partner. Carol Smith has provided the charming drawings which introduce each chapter. To these people I give my heartfelt thanks. In addition, thanks to others who have read and commented on the manuscript: Doris Cooper McCoy, Clarence Whitefield, Vivian Parks, Mel Williams, Warren Carr, and Bob McClernon. And to my husband, the reason I have been a Watts Streeter for 45 years, who read this manuscript, as all others, with his careful editor's eye.

Finally, two very helpful manuscripts were the autobiography written by Sylvester Green and *The Oral Memoirs of Warren Tyree Carr*, collected by David Strickland for the Baylor University Institute for Oral History. This last manuscript can be found in the Watts Street Church library.

Shirley Strobel
Durham, N.C.
May 2, 1998

CHAPTER ONE



In the Beginning

The need was obvious. Trinity Park, one of the first planned residential areas in Durham, was growing rapidly, and it didn't have a Baptist church. To get to any other Baptist church meant a lengthy ride down a dirt road.

On the other hand, in 1923, Watts Street was paved from Main Street to Club Boulevard, to provide easy access to the county prison farm, which was located where Northgate mall is today. Most of the territory west of Buchanan Boulevard and north of Green Street was open land covered with pine trees and broom sage. The 800 block on Watts Street was farm land, with only seven houses built on the entire length of Watts Street. The western city limits were bounded by Buchanan Boulevard, just one block beyond Watts Street. Durham was still a little town of about 20,000. Trinity College, with its campus running parallel to Watts Street only a block away, was about to receive a \$40 million gift from James Buchanan Duke and to become the East Campus of Duke University. The time and the place were right for a new church at Watts Street and Urban Avenue.

With this in mind, some of Durham's business and pro-

fessional leaders gathered January 14, 1923, at the George Watts School. Some were there because they wanted a neighborhood church that was more convenient to their prosperous homes in the Trinity Park area. Others were dissatisfied with their own churches and were looking elsewhere. All felt the need for a family church.

The group elected Judge W. H. Young to serve as its chairman, with J. M. Cheek as secretary. Twelve of those present spoke in favor of a new church. The group passed a resolution naming 25 members representing various Baptist churches to meet and, if they deemed it wise, to organize a church, secure a lot, provide a temporary meeting place, and call together Baptists to make a report on their findings. Yes, there was interest in starting a church.

Yet interest alone was not enough; it took energy and organizational ability to turn the dream into reality. Only two weeks later, on January 28, the Committee of 25 met and heard a report that property on the corner of Watts Street and Urban Avenue was available for purchase. The Committee decided to survey the neighborhood in that area to ascertain if there were enough interest to merit a new church, and members of the committee volunteered to conduct the survey in their assigned areas. In addition, two committees were set up: one, to secure a temporary meeting place, and the other, to lay plans for a Sunday School.

When the group gathered a week later, although the survey was not yet complete, 127 persons in the Watts Street neighborhood had indicated they were interested in a new Baptist church. A committee was appointed to draw up a covenant and Rules of Church Order. A site was chosen, the corner of Watts Street and Urban Avenue. Dr. Carl P. Norris, who had arranged for the first meeting at the George Watts School, got permission to hold services at the school until a church building could be constructed to house the projected church. (The church would meet in the school for about 18

months until they could move into the basement under the partially-completed sanctuary.)

All was in order for the formal organizational meeting, which was held on March 4, 1923. On that date, when Rev. T. M. Green, pastor of the West Durham Baptist Church (now known as the Greystone Baptist Church), gave the invitation, some 126 came forward out of the 159 who had expressed interest during the neighborhood survey. The response of these persons, pledging themselves to the covenant of the new church, brought about the actualization of the church. One of those early members was Reverend Green's son, C. Sylvester Green, an English teacher at Durham High School who was, in a few years, to become pastor of the newly organized church. (Later action of the Deacons decreed that all members applying by letter from their home churches before March 17, 1923, would be considered charter members; the list includes 157 members. Their names are memorialized on a tablet located near the front door of the church.) Eight Deacons were elected: J.S. Eubanks, Dr. William J. H. Cotton, F. R. Clark, Dr. E. H. Bowling, E. C. Johnson, J. T. Salmon, D. C. May, and Dr. Carl P. Norris. The new church was to be called Watts Street Baptist Church.

At the first Deacons' meeting two nights later, Dr. Norris was elected chairman of the Deacons. Two nights after that three trustees were elected: W. C. Lyon, H. C. Barbee, and B. W. Fassett. J. M. Cheek was elected church clerk, and H. C. Barbee, Sunday School Superintendent.

An option was taken to buy two lots, both with houses, at the corner of Watts Street and Urban Avenue for \$10,000. Two members of the organizing group agreed to sign the notes for the land. A two-story white house that was on the property was removed, and a second house on the Watts Street end of the property was moved to the lower end of the corner lot and turned so that it faced Urban Avenue. (This

house was later used for church offices.) Mary and Ralph Whitfield, who had occupied one of the houses, both became members of the new church and remained active until their deaths.

In May the trustees decided that the church would build a sanctuary with a basement that was fitted for Sunday School and offices. The church budget was set, at that time, at \$40,000 for the coming year. Later, it was raised to \$60,000 to cover the initial expenses of building. The annual budget settled at \$10,000 in 1925.

J.T. Salmon and C.H. Shipp began to study the architecture of other churches, some in the United States and some in Europe. When these two finished their research, the church hired Stanhope Johnson of Lynchburg, Virginia, as architect to bring their vision into reality. Thus began the erection of a graceful stone structure in English Tudor style, quite different from the typical Southern Baptist church. This was a building with soaring arches pointed at the top. The interior curving beams supporting the tall structure were wooden, in contrast to the Winnsboro blue granite and limestone structure of the building outside. The red tile roof added a touch of color. Later the church doors were painted red to match.

The church had relatively simple stained glass windows, with one beautiful Tiffany front window, built in New York, which centered on Jesus, the Good Shepherd. At the time the church was built, none of the windows were designated as memorials. Later, the congregation made a gift of the Jesus, Good Shepherd, window to C. T. Council to memorialize members of his family as he desired, in appreciation for his large contribution to paying off the mortgage on the building. Other windows were named as memorials for former church members, in exchange for monetary gifts of \$125 to the church.

The cornerstone for the sanctuary was laid on May 27, 1924. During construction a vat of tar, which was used to lay the tile roof, ignited and sent up a large cloud of smoke, staining the side of the sanctuary on Urban Avenue. This scar remained visible for a number of years.

The church building was formally opened for worship April 5, 1925, although its actual use for Sunday School and other activities began as soon as the structure's basement was completed. Cost of construction was estimated at \$144,000, of which \$80,000 was borrowed. Twenty-five members co-signed the promissory note covering the mortgage. Following the initial worship service and the succeeding dedication service on April 18, a two-week revival was held.

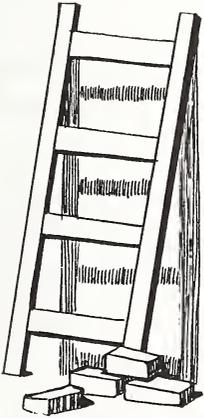
Even before the newly-born church completed plans for the new sanctuary, Watts Street Baptist Church hired its first full-time pastor. Rev. Howard Weeks accepted a call from the new church in September, 1923.



Sanctuary before 1969

CHAPTER TWO

Building (and Paying for) the Church



Depression and Financial Crisis. The first crisis for the young church was one most new enterprises face. It was up to its ears in debt. The beautiful new sanctuary had to be paid for. The church attacked the debt effectively until the 1929 stock market crash and subsequent depression drained away too many resources.

The cost of the church had doubled over the original estimates; \$144,000—a large sum—was the final tab. At first, the plan was to leave part of the church incomplete and unequipped, yet the entire church was finished during the initial construction. In 1924 the trustees borrowed \$33,000 for the building but had only \$1,938 in pledges. However, church women came on strong in their determination to help pay for the church. One group notable for its early dedication was the Women's Bible Class. By 1925 these women had raised \$1,000 to completely pay their pledge for the construction. The \$1,000 had been collected dollar by dollar through ice cream socials on the lawn and cake and Brunswick stew sales. In addition, every woman in the church pledged to make a patch for a quilt; each patch was embroidered with the name of a donor from whom the seamstress had received some money for the building fund.

As the building went up, the trustees had to borrow \$80,000 from Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company in Greensboro, at 7% interest, with the understanding that the mortgage would be repaid at a rate of \$8,000 annually for ten years, plus interest. Repayment problems arose as early as 1926. They were so severe that the church members almost lost their church twice.

The first major problem involved paying off the \$30,000 in notes over and above the mortgage. In September, 1926, Pastor Sylvester Green and H. Clyde Barbee, a local banker, compiled a list of five men they felt could afford to give several thousand dollars each. Then they called a meeting at the home of A.J. (Major) Draughon, church treasurer. Invited to attend, in addition to Draughon, were W.C. Lyon, C.T. Council, Dr. Carl P. Norris, and J.T. Salmon. Green and Barbee told these men they felt they could raise, at most, \$10,000 from the rest of the congregation, though \$30,000 was necessary. The five men then were asked to contribute enough to make up the difference, \$20,000, to pay off the notes.

Dr. Norris spoke first without hesitation, "\$20,000 divided by five means that each of us would have to give \$4,000." For a moment it seemed as though the whole idea would disappear into thin air. Then Salmon said, "I'll have to borrow that much from the bank, but if the bank will let me have it, I will give it to the church." Each of the others also promised \$4,000; then Dr. Norris took out a check book and wrote his check for \$4,000, with Mr. Council and Mr. Lyon following suit. Mr. Salmon and Mr. Draughon each signed promissory notes for that amount. It was done! The church would pay its debts. Shortly afterwards, Major Draughon served the group ice cream, saying it was the most expensive ice cream he had ever served. In October of 1926, the church held a dramatic ceremony and burned the notes that had been paid off in cash, more than \$28,000.

Buoyed by such success, young Pastor Green had another idea and somewhat brashly approached Benjamin N. Duke, son of the late Washington Duke and brother of the equally famous James Buchanan Duke, major donors of the Duke Memorial Methodist Church and vital promoters of Duke University. After Green laid out the struggle to pay the church's indebtedness for the building, the small number of heads of families, and the vast potential of Watts Street Church to serve the community and especially the students of Duke University, just a block away, Duke said simply, "I am going to send you a check. I don't know how much it will be, but it will be a pleasure to help you in the work there." Several days later a check for \$5,000 arrived.

But the financial troubles were far from over. The \$8,000 annual mortgage payment became a heavy load. By late October, the church had been able to make only partial payments two months in a row. The accumulated interest was due and there was no money to pay it.

After considerable discussion, Green suggested that he and several Deacons talk with officials at Jefferson Standard Life Insurance company, holders of the mortgage. Green, H.C. Barbee and D.C. May set out to Greensboro early on October 22. May told his companions that he had prayed a great deal the night before and he was certain something good would happen. As they passed Elon College, May turned his auto into a church yard and got out. He walked over to a large outdoor table and invited the other two men to join him in prayer. D. C. May was known for his powerful praying: such intense supplication of man and God left few unmoved. May then led the group in prayer for 20 minutes, telling the Lord all about their trip and what they hoped to accomplish, namely to find some way to work out mortgage payments the church could afford. Once in Greensboro, the trio made their case to an official from Jefferson Standard:

they stressed that there were some wealthy, or, at least, potentially wealthy men in the church; that the congregation, as a whole, was made up of professional men and business men; that with some relief now, they could work their way out of the present problems.

The insurance executive then told them that he understood their problem. He said his own church was having similar problems. He also noted Watts Street customarily made its interest payments on time, then added:

I want you to know that Jefferson Standard has no plan to foreclose this mortgage. We want you to have your church and continue your program in the community. To that end, I am going to make you this offer: you pay whatever you can whenever a payment comes due. Just be sure to keep the interest payments current. We have faith there will come a day when you will be able to resume your full payments and eventually wipe out the entire indebtedness.

Tears were running down Mr. May's face. Mr. Barbee's expression was one of delight mingled with disbelief. Pastor Green had a lump in his throat. The executive dictated a letter on the spot for the three to take back to their fellow church members.

As the depression deepened, it became harder and harder for the church to keep up, even with the interest payments. In December, 1931, John Sprunt Hill, one of Durham's wealthiest and most influential citizens, called all ministers together to ask them to admonish their congregations to stay steady: that the banks were solvent and there was no possibility any bank would go out of business. Yet in January, 1932, when Green was about to deposit his salary checks in a local bank, the teller asked him if he really wanted to do that. He did. The next day the bank closed its

doors, and Green managed to get only 20 cents return on every dollar he had in the bank. He was, for a short time, without money to buy groceries.

Green was not the only one in trouble. In 1934 one-fourth of the church members were without jobs. A man earning only \$12 a week might have to support a family of five. In this desperate situation, the church again faced bankruptcy because it could no longer pay even the interest on the Jefferson Standard mortgage. The mortgage holders gave the church an ultimatum: make good the unpaid interest and some part of the principal or we foreclose on the building. One night after a called meeting to discuss how the crisis might be handled, five men remained to talk over the situation. In mid-summer, the heat in the church building sent them outdoors to sit on the tall steps to the Urban Avenue entrance. As they waited, D.C. May went around to the other church doors and locked them to secure the building. After a while, when the cooler air revived them, they returned to the church building and settled down in the ladies' parlor. The last man in, D.C. May, locked the side door behind them. Once they were all settled, May said, "All right, gentlemen, we are locked inside the church. And we aren't going to unlock those doors until we decide what we can do to solve this situation." And then, led by May, they prayed. Slowly, the five arrived at their common solution and then went home to mortgage their own homes (with a second, and in one case, a third mortgage) in order to save the church. Three of these five had saved the church from ruin a few years earlier: Major Draughon, Dr. Carl P. Norris, and J.T. Salmon were now joined by J.M. Cheek and D.C. May. Later, Wortham C. Lyon also mortgaged his hardware business to help pay the church mortgage.

By dint of some drastic budget cutting, even cutting Pastor Green's salary in half from \$4,200 to \$2,400, the church continued to make the required payments. Before

Green left the church in 1932, he suggested to C.T. Council (whose B.C. Remedy business had grown from simple packaging of his own blend of headache powders for Durham customers to national exposure) that Council might offer a challenge gift to church members in order to make the principal payments on time. Accordingly, the last payment to Jefferson Life was made in 1935 by a check for \$39,142.66, signed by H.C. Barbee and framed to hang in the church library. In December, 1935, the Deacons decided to present to C.T. Council the large front window to be used as a memorial for his family, in appreciation of his large gift, making possible the payment in full of all the mortgages and loans against the church.

Watts Street Baptist Church has had no substantial debt since this time.

Later Property Improvements. Bit by bit the church moved to enlarge the property surrounding the church. In 1947 a house and lot on Urban Avenue behind the church were purchased. Since there was limited educational space in the church building, the “church house” at 1020 Urban Avenue served for a time as a church office and Sunday School classrooms. In 1954 the Warren Carr family moved into that house, which served as the parsonage until 1960, when the church bought another parsonage for them at 1020 Demerius Ave. When Robert McClernon was called as pastor in 1965, the church sold the Demerius house and purchased one at 705 Frasier Avenue for a parsonage, which the McClernons eventually purchased from the church.

Beginning in 1946 Warren Carr urged the Deacons to plan for an educational wing to be added to the church building. After eight years of Carr’s prodding, this wing was finally finished and put into use. At this time air conditioning was installed. No longer did the summer months see numerous cardboard “Coca-Cola fans” or bulletins waving to stir the sultry air during worship services. The cost of the

new classrooms was \$218,000. Since building supplies were still limited because of wartime shortages, the floor was undergirded with wood, not steel beams, which meant the floors were somewhat uneven; the striped linoleum showed the flaws in the structure.

Since the seating capacity of 500 in the sanctuary was continually pressed to accommodate all of the attending congregation (chairs were placed in the side room, the Cheek Bible Class room, where a public address system had been installed), some church members wished to build a larger sanctuary at the same time the classrooms were being added. Marion Ham, architect and church member, drew up plans that included the present educational wing (forming a leg of an L with the sanctuary) and a new wing to the north, parallel to the present sanctuary, which would become a chapel. These plans, which included an enlarged sanctuary, were not put into effect, since there seemed to be "a great deal of sentiment attached to our present sanctuary, which we respect."

In 1959 the decision to build a new sanctuary was again hotly debated. Meeting until very late one night, the Deacons considered whether to purchase the Holton property to the north of the church, with the expectation of building the larger sanctuary. C.T. Council was adamantly opposed; however, the vote to buy the property went against him. The next morning he appeared at the office of A.C. Sorrell, church treasurer, with a check for \$10,000 to be applied to the property purchase. Doris Cooper McCoy remembers playing in the new lot, called "the meadow," before it was turned into a parking lot.

By 1965 the need for a new organ became urgent. On July 19, 1966, Bob McClernon got a big surprise. He received a letter from Paul Wright, president of Central Carolina Bank and Trust Company. It read:

This is to officially advise you that I have been authorized, by a donor who prefers to remain anonymous, to offer to your congregation a challenge gift. This gift is to be used to partially defray the costs of a new organ and/or for necessary or desirable renovations of the sanctuary or other areas of your church.

The amount of the gift is not to exceed \$60,000 over a four-year period, including the current fiscal year, 1966. The donor has authorized me to match all funds collected by the church in excess of its operating budget--not to exceed \$20,000 in any one year.

The church rose to the challenge, and the new Austin organ was installed in 1969 (see Chapter 8, Singing to the Glory of God). To accommodate the larger organ and its pipes the "Jordan River" baptismal font, which had been built above and behind the pulpit, was removed and a baptismal pool was built to the left of the sanctuary in the Cheek Bible Class room. Attractive lattice work covered the organ pipes, and a modest gold cross was installed, with some dissent, in place of the "Jordan River."

Attention to landscaping and site development was given in 1968, when a long-range master landscaping plan was developed. The first stage, which was put into place, concentrated on the area back of the church, with the demolition of the old parsonage building and the paving of a parking lot where it stood. Also a playground for young children was added behind the educational wing. Other stages of the plan (which included a memorial garden on Urban Avenue and an amphitheater at the front) were not carried out, with the exception of a paved parking lot to the north of the church.

In 1974 the church spent \$100,000 on renovation and repair of the church: drains, roof tiles, gutters, woodwork, stained glass, ceilings all were replaced or restored. In 1985

the church raised \$60,000 for capital improvements and missions, with half of the fund going for each. The improvements included remodeled toilets and ramps at front and back entrances for the physically impaired, and a sound system for the hearing impaired.

After many years of discussion about the desirability of providing a place at the church for the deposit of the cremains of church members, in 1994 long-time member, John Cheek, and his brother, Charles, established the Maude Wall Cheek Memorial Garden on the north side of the sanctuary in honor of their mother, a charter member.

Currently the church is undergoing renovation with the addition of an elevator tower and remodeling of the educational facilities. Nancy Rand and Worth Lutz served as co-chairs of the very successful Capital Campaign, during which each church family was asked to give, over a three-year period, an amount that would equal their current annual pledge. In response, members pledged \$460,210, oversubscribing the goal of \$450,000. After the campaign was over, it was discovered that the initial cost estimates did not include a stone facing for the tower. Nannie Mae Herndon singlehandedly raised the additional \$50,000 needed to ensure a tower that would match the rest of the building. Future plans include conversion of the church parlor into a chapel, with funding to be provided by an anonymous donor.

CHAPTER 3

Growing the Church

Weeks Pastorate, 1923-1925. The Weeks' years were tempestuous. Nevertheless, they were productive. In a little over two years, a church building was completed, and by January, 1926, membership grew from 157 to 237.

Howard Weeks is described as gruff, outspoken, a minister who expected to have a major voice in everything the church did. He was very forceful, in and out of the pulpit. Weeks was a stocky man who did not hesitate to voice his opinion, sometimes quite bluntly. These blunt ways offended many church members. Yet, at the same time, he afforded wonderful organizational leadership for the Sunday School classes, especially for the younger age groups. His interest in the Boy Scouts led to the establishment of a troop in the church, which has continued, with the exception of a few years during World War II, throughout the life of the WSBC.

A graduate of Furman University, Weeks had been conducting a tent ministry, going from town to town in South Carolina. He was called to Watts Street in the fall of 1923.

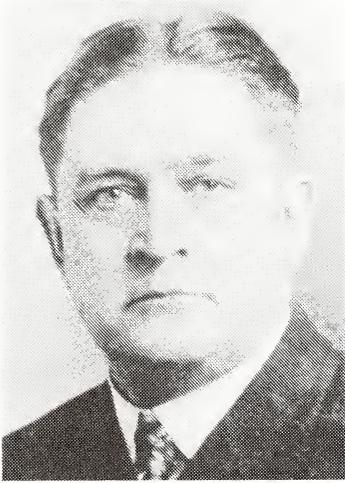


Weeks worked tirelessly to see the architect's plans for the church completed, even though he disagreed with them. Unfortunately, he did not see eye to eye with J.T. Salmon, Deacon, chair of the building committee, and a member of the City Council. Salmon had spent long hours studying churches not only in this country, but also in England before Weeks arrived, and he wanted to build this church right. Weeks, on the other hand, was interested in saving money for the church budget. The conflict spread beyond the two men to embroil the whole church.

Nevertheless, the church was built, without sacrificing beauty to budget. On Sunday, April 5, 1925, the new church was dedicated and ready to grow. Watts Street had two very successful revivals in the new facility that year.

Rev. Weeks' troubles, however, did not go away. His son, an architect, had interested Weeks in construction, and together they had raised several houses on Monmouth Ave. The Deacons resented his "moonlighting" and wanted him to spend all of his time in church work. The disagreement became so sharp that in the summer of 1925 the Board of Deacons sent a special committee to visit Mr. Weeks to suggest that he look for another pastorate. The report was that he rebuffed the Deacons' committee and told them to go home and pray for themselves and the church. That attitude fueled the opposition to him so that the Deacons made a second suggestion that he resign, which was again refused.

After the second try by the Deacons, Weeks himself brought the matter before the whole church on Sunday, November 6, 1925, and asked for a vote of confidence. He stationed himself on one side of the pulpit and his son, H. Raymond Weeks, on the other to count the votes. He asked all in favor of his remaining as pastor to stand. Approximately 25 stood. Then, he called for those who thought he should leave to stand. Fewer than a dozen stood up. More



Howard Weeks

than 150 had not voted. Weeks interpreted this vote as a mandate for him to stay.

With the church, especially the Deacons, up in arms, the Board called a meeting of the church for Friday, November 13, with no announced purpose. When Friday the thirteenth arrived, Weeks, as moderator, called the meeting to order and then demanded to know why it had been called. Dr. Carl Norris, chair of the Deacons, listed the various efforts to get the pastor to leave and then made this motion: That the pulpit of the Watts Street Baptist Church is hereby declared vacant. The motion was adopted 110 to 6.

When Weeks realized what was happening, he asked for, and was given, permission to resign. In May, 1926, Rev. Weeks left Durham to take the pastorate of the College Avenue Baptist Church in Bluefield, West Virginia.

Green Pastorate, 1926-1932. When the Deacons began their search for a replacement for Weeks, C. Sylvester Green was a member of Watts Street Church and well known as the son of one of the ministers who had figured prominently in the organization of the church. Green agreed to find pastors to supply the pulpit after Weeks left and was urged to fill it himself if he had any trouble obtaining a speaker. The Deacons had issued a call to two ministers who declined to come to the young church.

More and more they were impressed with the young English teacher who was finding supply ministers for them. Dr. Norris and C. T. Council both suggested they might ask him to fill their pulpit permanently. Green told them "that I

had no leaning toward the active ministry; that I had already taken one graduate degree in English and was working toward my doctorate and planned to make a career of teaching English. I added that I hoped eventually to go into college teaching. I left it at that, thinking I had been convincing in my statement."

At 11 p.m., January 16, 1926, all eight members of the Board of Deacons, led by Dr. Norris, came to Green's home. They told Green that at their meeting earlier in the evening his name had come up in a discussion of where to go to find a new minister. They were not deterred by the fact that Green had no theological training. Rather they voted unanimously to talk to Green once more.

The Deacons were persistent. By 1:45 a.m., probably as much to end the marathon discussions as to represent a changed mind, Green said he would consider the call to the ministry. He agreed to continue pulpit supply and they agreed to put no pressure on him.



C. Sylvester Green

Six weeks later C. Sylvester Green agreed to become pastor at Watts Street Baptist Church. He would start after June 1, allowing him to finish out the school year as a teacher. He was ordained by the church on May 30, 1926, and married there a week later. For Green it meant a big change in his academic goals. He already had a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wake Forest, a Master's degree from Duke and was well on the way to a Doctor of Philosophy in English at Duke. Now he needed courses in theology and church history. On top of his other duties as pastor, he added an

academic load that ended with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Duke Divinity School in 1930. He continued graduate work at Duke for two years after that.

Green, at this point in his twenties, was “energetic beyond belief.” He worked hard all the time and had proof of accomplishment to show for it. The number of pastoral calls he made was prodigious! In 1927 it was 1,168; in 1928, 1,230; and in 1929, 1,440. In 1931 he reported he had visited the home of every member of the church during the previous two months. He was determined to actuate the motto printed on the church bulletin, “Where strangers are greeted as friends.” As a result, the number of church members increased during his pastorate from 240 when he came to 411 when he left; attendance at morning worship service rose from an average of 250 in 1926 to 315 in 1929.

Green energetically organized a neighborhood Vacation Bible School and made a special attempt to reach Duke students. He decided the church needed a newsletter, *The Messenger*; when the Deacons did not budget money for it, he paid for it himself. He published a church directory every year he was pastor--all of this without secretarial assistance!

Green was state president of the Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU) and was in demand as a speaker on training unions. He also was a frequent contributor to state and Southern Baptist BYPU magazines. Green was firmly wedded to the Baptist tradition, as was his father; he led the Deacons in campaigns of visitation to win souls and awarded Southern Baptist seals for accomplishment in mission study to women in the W.M.S. His theology, however, came under attack by at least one dear lady who was scandalized that he referred to Joseph as “Jesus' father,” seeming to undermine the Virgin birth.

The church Green took over was no bargain at that point.

It was deeply in debt; no provision had been made for the pastor. He had no office, no secretarial help, and very little in the way of office supplies. Often he ended up buying stamps, paper clips, and typing paper from his own pocket.

Green's first objective was to keep Watts Street Baptist Church from going broke. This he undertook with tremendous zeal and much success, although his financial and programmatic plans for the church ultimately proved too much for the congregation to take.

After the stock market crash in 1929, times were very lean. When the Deacons wanted to cut the budget, Green advised they redouble their efforts to raise the amount needed. Some complained that he did not know the value of a dollar. At a crucial Deacons' meeting in 1931, Green volunteered that the Deacons must do whatever they had to; he would live with their decision. After he left, they decided to cut his salary almost in half, from \$4200 to \$2400. Though Green said that he was relieved they had cut his salary instead of entirely eliminating the position of choir director, he began to question whether he should stay at WSBC. During his six years at Watts Street, he had made many contacts with other Baptists throughout the South. He wondered if another church might let him carry out the hopes he had for church growth without the severe stringency he experienced at WSBC.

To supplement his salary, Green had been writing editorials for both the *Durham Herald* and *Sun*. After the editor suffered a heart attack, he wrote eight editorials daily for four months, while still pastor of WSBC. Green left Watts Street in 1932 for Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, and later moved to Hartsville, South Carolina, as president of Coker College. Green eventually returned to Durham to earn his Ph.D. at Duke, and, instead of returning to Coker, he became editor of the *Durham Morn-*



ing Herald.

Riddick Pastorate, 1932-38. J. T. Riddick came to Watts Street from Norfolk, Virginia, having served five churches there and, earlier, the Temple Baptist Church in Durham. From the old school of Baptists, Mr. Riddick was a fiery preacher with a formidable presence: the children were somewhat frightened of him as he stood in the pulpit, tall, bald-headed, with black thick-rimmed glasses, and always wearing a black frock coat. His sermons at Temple had dealt with the evils abounding in Durham. Nevertheless, his parishioners loved him.

Shortly after his arrival, he preached the fall revival, with the only fees paid going to the song leader. To enhance the effect of the week of preaching, Riddick worked with an active evangelism committee and proposed a program of visitation for evangelistic purposes. The next year Riddick conducted two revivals at Watts Street, one in the spring and one in the fall. These efforts were rewarded with an increase in membership: at the end of Riddick's pastorate there were 526 members, and attendance at worship services was at an all-time high.

Riddick initiated the church library by offering to give the church some 100 volumes from his own collection, known as one of the largest owned by any minister in North Carolina. The gift was conditioned on the church's agreement to start a library by appointing a librarian. In due time the offer was accepted, and the library opened.

No church work was too menial for this articulate and well-read minister. On wintry Saturday nights he would

drop by the church to start a fire in the furnace and bank it so that on Sunday morning the sanctuary would be cozy warm for services. At the same time, he served on prestigious boards, such as the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Board of Trustees of Campbell College.

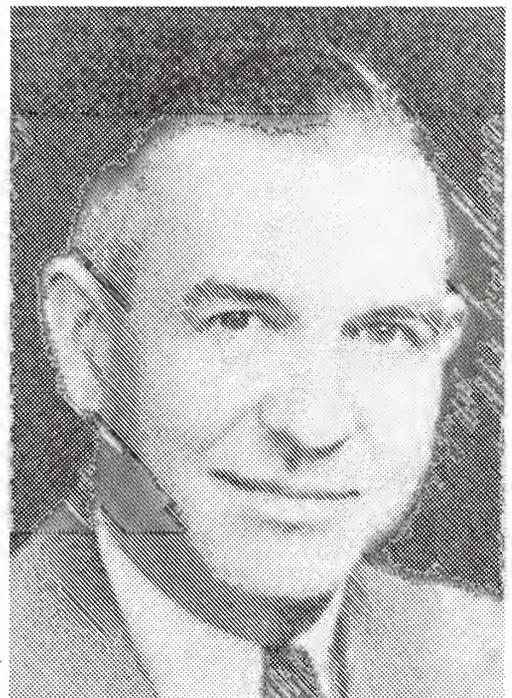
The major achievement of Riddick's pastorate was the paying off of the mortgage on the church building, which was accomplished in 1935 with the help of a gift from C. T. Council.

Riddick had a radio congregation as well as a Watts Street congregation. He reached hundreds through his quiet, spiritual fireside chats broadcast over the Durham radio station, WDNC.

Poor health had been a problem for Riddick since he came to WSBC. He had suffered a heart attack, but continued his work. In 1938 he became seriously ill and died in his sleep a month later just before Christmas. In January the Deacons voted to memorialize Riddick by dedicating a stained glass window in the sanctuary to his memory. At the time of his death it was estimated he had held approximately 270 revivals.

Herring Pastorate, 1939-1946. When Dr. Owen Herring accepted the call to come to Watts Street in June, 1939, the depression was over and good times seemed ahead. But war clouds were looming, and Dr. Herring's pastorate spanned the years of World War II.

Dr. Herring was a very emotional man, totally dedicated to his



Dr. Owen Herring

calling. He was a graduate of Wake Forest College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, with a Doctorate of Divinity from Georgetown College. He had served pastorates in Kentucky.

One of his greatest assets was his wife, Ethel, a gifted writer with a dynamic personality, who formerly worked for the Southern Baptist Convention to organize youth groups from church to church in Kentucky. Just three months after arriving, she organized a strong Sunday School program. She also began a Baptist Training Union for 50 young men, which she continued to direct as long as she was at WSBC. Through her the church again reached out to Duke students, especially those living on East Campus.

The church felt the pain of the war through the young men it sent into service. A bulletin board with the names of the "boys in service" was placed in the vestibule of the church; 127 members of the congregation were directly involved in the war effort. J.B. Brame, serving as secretary for the Board of Deacons, relinquished his post when he went to war and then resumed it when he returned. Seven did not come home: Zalph Andrews, Hunter Carpenter, Philip Adams, William Sally, Demming Ward, and Frank May were killed; Ted Puryear was missing in action. The family of Demming Ward, who died in a plane crash over China, honored him with a plaque under one of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary. The Deacons voted to install a system of carillon bells as a fitting memorial to those who served their country in the armed services during the war.

Church members, led by the wonderful example of the Herrings, opened their homes to boys in the service from nearby Camp Butner. Women of the church responded to the Red Cross' request and opened a sewing room every Wednesday to make hospital supplies. The church women volunteered the largest, most active group in Durham to

entertain servicemen at the U.S.O. canteen.

With a total budget of around \$20,000, the church voted to donate \$100 in 1942 and \$300 in 1946 to help pay the salary of a person to teach Bible in the Durham City Schools. It also designated \$1,200 in 1944 to support the new Baptist Council of Durham Churches, which had been formed in 1940 with the pastor and D.C. May attending the organizational meeting. This Council was the predecessor of the Yates Baptist Association.

The Watts Street Baptist Church had been a neighborhood church until this time. With the war came a change in the membership when new faces appeared in the congregation. The church opened its doors to G.I.s, some of the 20,000 soldiers in the 78th Division stationed at Camp Butner, just down the road. Many who moved to North Carolina from other states during the war years thought this was a good place to live and stayed; some Watts Street members were displaced to other locations around the country and left. The older generation of founding fathers began to relinquish their leadership to a new generation of people who had moved into Trinity Park and refurbished its 50-year-old homes. Dr. Herring saw this change as a good thing and worked to extend the church's membership to the surrounding communities of Hillsboro, Wake Forest, Raleigh, and outlying sections of Durham County. Watts Street was no longer a neighborhood church but saw itself with an expanding mission in the area.

The stress and strain of this challenge took its toll on Dr. Herring's physical and emotional health. His total commitment led to his deep emotional involvement, which sometimes expressed itself in tears while he was in the pulpit. Gradually his weeping before the congregation became more and more uncontrollable, so that he began to lose his effectiveness. Fortunately, at that point Wake Forest College

invited him to join their Department of Religion, an invitation he promptly accepted in 1946. The church had grown, during his pastorate, from 526 to 750 members; contributions had increased from \$17,653 in 1940 to \$48,221 in 1945.

Carr Pastorate, 1946-1964. It was feisty, independent Warren Carr who brought the Watts Street Baptist Church into being as an innovative, open, liberal church in the new South. Before his coming, Watts Street had been strictly Southern Baptist, both in theology and in social practice.

A native of Lexington, Kentucky, Carr was a graduate of Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, and the Southern Theological Seminary at Louisville. He had held pastorates in Coeburn, Virginia, and Princeton, West Virginia, prior to his coming to Watts Street and had developed the strong individuality and freedom of thought so characteristic of people from that area. Carr brought a strong, intellectually challenging approach to theology that appealed to Duke people. As he said,

The ministry to students was one of trying to make their theology as intellectually respectable as their other disciplines, and in those days they ate that up. Every Sunday night 20 or 30 students were in our home until midnight, eating, talking, no games—never any games—eating and talking. Southeastern Seminary had not yet been formed. There were bright students who wanted to be professors of religion coming to Duke—many, many Baptists....That church has former members on the Wake Forest University faculty, on the Southeastern faculty, on the Southern Seminary faculty, on the Baylor faculty, on the Midwestern faculty. It was just the times, and so we clicked.

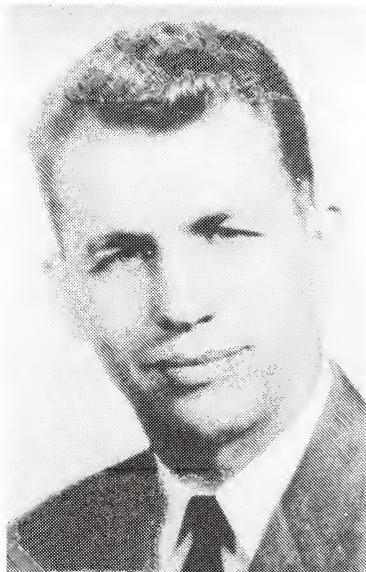
During the period from 1946, when Carr came, to 1964, the

peak of church membership, Watts Street nearly doubled its members, from 746 to 1346. If a family did not get to church early, they might find themselves sitting in the Cheek Bible Class room, to the left of the sanctuary, listening to the sermon through the public address system. Additional chairs to seat the crowd were placed in the aisles, and talk of the need for a larger sanctuary was heard. One survey in 1956 showed that only 53% of the congregation on Sunday mornings were church members.

The growth came not only from Duke constituents, but from others in the community who were drawn by Carr's outspoken stand against segregation and by the general revival of interest in religion characteristic of the 1960s.

The increase in membership caused the church to inaugurate a second Sunday morning worship service at 8:30. At its peak, 100 persons attended the early service. Further adjustment was made to the mid-week prayer service after a 1958 survey found that 95 per cent of the church members did not attend regularly. In 1965 the Wednesday service was changed to a vespers service on Sunday afternoon. This, too, was to die for lack of attendance.

During his ministry Carr battled the status quo in two directions: state and church. Not only was he a community leader in the desegregation battle, but he also was a leader of the battle within the Baptist denomination to be more open both theologically (he opposed literal interpretation of the Bible) and administratively (he favored abandoning the requirement of immersion for membership for those already



Warren Carr

baptized). These stances in the pulpit made long-time members of the church proud of his leadership, even while it sometimes set their teeth on edge. Yet the criticism of Warren Carr--and there was quite a lot--stayed within the church. A person had every right to express a contrary opinion at the church, but downtown Warren Carr always had ten people ready to defend him.

Indeed, feelings about Watts Street liberals got so hot that one of the spiritual leaders of the church took it upon himself to answer the concerns of the long-time members. These concerns were:

- That Duke members have been favored by the ministry of Warren Carr to the exclusion of adequate ministry to established residents of Durham.
- That Duke members have increasingly taken over educational and administrative responsibilities of the church, with the effect of displacing from these positions established residents of Durham.
- With the disproportionate control of the education and administration of the church exercised by Duke members, the church has increasingly been pushed in directions which were contrary to desires of established residents of Durham (e.g., race relations and departure from Southern Baptist emphases).

To respond to these concerns, a survey was conducted that showed Duke members did not hold a larger number of church offices or teaching positions, in proportion to their eight per cent of the total membership, than other church members. The survey concluded with some trenchant remarks:

It is very doubtful in my mind that anyone can

show evidence of a less effective ministry to members of this congregation because of [Warren Carr's] ministry to Duke constituents. That the Duke constituency have helped to challenge the church and pushed it in directions not favored by some of the church cannot be denied. But this also must be understood. No Christian church and no Christian can maintain both the integrity of the biblical witness and the church and favor the continuation of racial segregation and its concomitant abuses. This matter is not a mere matter of opinion; it is an irrefutable fact of the Gospel....To be an agitator is the role of the Christian in the alien Kingdom of the World.

If the Duke constituency has shown us some inadequacies in ourselves so also we have demonstrated that education is not the hope for world salvation. That hope is Jesus Christ. Now once and for all, I say stop this childish bickering. We are capable of much better than this. We have work to do in God's Kingdom.

Throughout this whole process, the discussion and survey were kept quiet, so that neither the Duke community (nor Warren Carr) realized they had been "investigated" until this history was written.

In 1959 the Spiritual Life Committee recommended that the church rewrite the covenant, which had remained the same since its inception in 1923. After the committee hammered out together the basic principles, Herbert C. Bradshaw, editor of the *Durham Morning Herald*, worked with Carr to produce the final version. These two differed dramatically over the question of the necessity of immersion. Very careful attention was given the final wording of this paragraph:

We covenant to include all people everywhere

within the circle of our love and concern and to regard as of the household of faith all who worship Christ as Savior and Lord. As we hold to our Baptist heritage, we shall seek with all Christians a unity of spirit and action.

A copy of the new covenant was placed in each hymnal for use the first Sunday of each month, when it was read aloud by the congregation to confirm the acceptance of new members into the church. This covenant was used in congregational worship until 1997.

To enlarge his own experience beyond Southern Baptists, Carr requested, and received, additional expense reimbursement for travel to New York to attend a pastors' conference at Union Theological Seminary, in addition to the Southern Baptist Conference each year. He went back to the New York area to search for new staff members. One staff member hired by Carr was to serve longer than any other WSBC church professional. Eleanor Whitfield began her 31-year career as church secretary in December, 1951, and devotedly ran the office until her retirement in 1982.

Twenty-seven families brought a recommendation to the Deacons in 1947 that the church establish a pre-school for children from 3 to 6 years, since Durham provided no kindergartens. Accordingly, a Board of Directors was set up, consisting of five WSBC members, and the school came into being. This precedent, begun for church families, received a mission emphasis in later years, first targeting retarded children and finally, providing day care that included an indigent and interracial group. However, a further recommendation from new parents with babies met with Deacon resistance: they refused to incorporate into the Sunday worship service a dedication of parents with newly born infants. Not until Bob McClernon came in 1965 did baby dedications become incorporated regularly into the worship service.

In response to many requests for financial aid received by Warren Carr, the Board of Deacons set up an emergency fund to be used at the discretion of the minister. Growth in missions giving during the last ten years of Carr's ministry was proportionally greater than the growth in total giving: in 1955 the church pledged \$39,831 and in 1965, \$84,919; in 1955 the church gave \$9,886 to missions and in 1965, \$25,680.

As a result of Warren Carr's ministry the church changed enough that it could consider some controversial moves: membership without immersion, dual alignment with the American Baptist Convention as well as the Southern Baptist Convention, and ordination of women as pastors and deacons. Only the ordination of a woman as pastor had actually taken place by the time Carr left in 1964 to accept a call to Wake Forest Baptist Church on the University campus in Winston-Salem. Carr never pushed the church beyond where some of the strong-minded Deacons were willing to go.

The Deacons expressed their appreciation of his ministry when he left with a heart-felt tribute: "Undoubtedly foremost and most important, we have admired and have been indelibly impressed with his eloquent and articulate, genuine and pure, clear and undaunted Christian voice." Others would say, "Oh yes, we loved him—when he left."

McClernon Pastorate, 1965-87. While Warren Carr led Watts Street to become an open, liberal church. Bob McClernon moved Watts Street to act upon its beliefs.

The McClernon years marked major moves in several directions: dual affiliation with the American Baptists as well as the Southern Baptists, acceptance of baptized members without immersion, increased disbursement of authority and responsibility from the Board of Deacons to the whole congregation, and ministering to the needy of Durham

through local missions.

McClernon was raised on a dairy farm near Springfield, Missouri. He graduated from Drury College in Springfield and from the Federated Theological Schools of the University of Chicago. After serving as Baptist Chaplain at the University of Chicago, he moved to Charlotte as Minister of Education at Myers Park Baptist Church, where he worked for nine years with the well-known liberal minister, Carlyle Marney.

McClernon was a deeply devout pastor, whose pulpit ministry focused on "revealing the Depth beneath the surface," as a tribute from the church pointed out. "Bob brought with him a questioning, searching, and loving attitude based upon a sound and solid confidence and belief in the God we all seek....Consistently, Sunday after Sunday, he has brought us sermons which do not allow us to escape." He sought to bring an understanding that "the incarnation is not an event centered in the past but a style of life and a mode of being as lively and powerful now as it was in Bethlehem of Judea." In short, he wanted the church to be the Body of Christ and become the means through which

Christ acts in the world of the present. During the years of his pastorate, many, many things were accomplished.

McClernon had closer ties with the American Baptist Churches U.S.A. than had Carr, who was raised as a Southern Baptist. McClernon brought the church to take a fresh look at the dual alignment question, with the result that in 1969 Watts Street became affiliated with the American Baptist Convention. With his leadership,



Robert McClernon

Watts Street became one of the original members of the American Baptist Churches of the South, which is made up primarily of black churches. Even more disruptive to the ties with Southern Baptists was Watts Street's decision in 1969 to accept members without requiring that they be baptized again by immersion. (Further discussion of these two issues appears in Chapter 4, Embracing the Future.)

During McClernon's tenure the power structure of the church changed, so that instead of the pastor and the Board of Deacons being the controlling force, the church became a community in which leadership and authority were widely shared. Until this change every proposal of any significance from any other congregationally elected board or committee required Deacon approval before being acted upon. By the mid-'70s other administrative and program groups began to enter into their own, authority was being democratized, and Deacons were moving away from a strictly administrative and watch-dog role toward becoming a servant group with special concern for matters such as lay pastoral care and the quality of fellowship existing within the church.

The change toward democratization of the church began with the worship service: in 1967 the Deacons received a recommendation that lay leaders be used more often in worship services, which had been conducted entirely by the pastor. They agreed that once a month a Deacon would participate in worship leadership. This practice gradually spread, especially during the pastorate of Mel Williams, to involve many church members as liturgists and readers of the morning scriptures.

Deacons were gradually drawn into sharing the pastoral ministry to church members. Growing out of McClernon's concern for "peripheral" members of the church came a visitation program in 1969; from March through May McClernon was accompanied by a Deacon on a visit to

homes of inactive members to see what the church could do for and with them. There followed a Deacon's retreat which concentrated on each Deacon's responsibility to be a caring person and ways of doing this. Finally, a Workshop Saturday for Deacons provided an attempt to clarify the role of leadership for Deacons and their participation in the ministry of church. Here began broader discussions about what it would mean to become involved as lay pastors in the church.

In a second attempt to change the nature of the Deacons' task, in 1971 McClernon asked the Board to join him in a quest for values which would truly reflect commitment to Christ; he suggested that the Board might become a supportive, helping community as participants together with others in the church to continue their Christian growth. Board members would find more meaning in participation through this kind of community, McClernon argued, than merely as functionaries in a task-oriented monthly meeting. "We have a special responsibility for the spiritual as well as the institutional welfare of the WSBC," continued McClernon. "It does not seem likely that we can exercise this responsibility and the renewal of the congregation committed to our care until we give thought to our own relationship to God and the brethren."

At the same time, the move away from the Board of Deacons as policy makers and toward more involvement of the whole congregation was happening in another area: finance. In 1971 congregational business meetings were inaugurated and held three times a year. As the church experienced increasing difficulties with the Yates Association and the Baptist State Convention, these meetings brought heated debate about budget items, such as contributions to the Southern Baptist Convention or missions project. In response, the Stewardship Committee recommended the church provide an opportunity for the congregation to have a

more active role in preparing the church budget and to understand more fully the programs and ministries supported by it. As a result, the Deacons agreed that the budget would be presented to church school classes with explanations prepared by various boards and committees. From this beginning grew the Budget Review Committee, a group of 27 church members, 12 appointed at large, meeting to consider the proposed budget.

Although the church had tried, rather unsuccessfully, to rely on Deacons to provide pastoral care through congregational groups, the idea of Deacons as lay ministers was fully implemented in 1975, when Deacons were paired to care for approximately twenty families per Deacon pair. This plan led, in later years, to the concept of Deacon groups, in which each Deacon was assigned a group of church members, with the entire church membership divided among them. The Deacons were to be lay ministers, providing pastoral care to the families in their group. The motto that appears presently on the cover of the church bulletin, "Every member a minister," is an extension of this idea.

Meanwhile, a somewhat different approach was tried the following year when Deacon Service Groups were instituted to deal with areas in the life of the church that needed attention. These areas were: fellowship, the larger church, new members and evangelism, and lay pastoral care. Currently, in 1998, both lay ministry groups and service groups are part of the church organization.

Watts Street Baptist Church had not been significantly involved in local missions until Bob McClernon's arrival. When he left, he was presented with a framed scripture of Jesus' words on Judgment Day: "Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it to me." This idea provided the spur to the many, many missions that were spawned at WSBC during the

McClernon years. The list inspired by McClernon includes: Hassle House (a crisis counseling service), a shelter for homeless women in the Mission House, Threshold Clubhouse for the mentally ill, Genesis Home for homeless families, Host Homes for families of Duke Hospital patients, Mediport to provide transportation for medical appointments, Meals on Wheels, CONTACT the telephone crisis counseling service, Habitat for Humanity, and neighborhood work with housing projects (Damar Court, the Hoover Road Project, and the Cornwallis Road Project).

Beginning in 1968 missions were handled for the church through an elected Board of Mission. Evangelism was specifically removed as one of the purposes of the Board of Mission at that time. From then on, Watts Street gained a reputation as the congregation most involved in outreach to the disadvantaged and needy in Durham. Members who were not directly involved in carrying out these missions contributed monetarily. A 1985 renovation of the church to accommodate the handicapped, at a cost of \$30,000, was matched by a contribution to the missions program of \$30,000.

Church members who have been involved in missions through Watts Street say that Bob McClernon helped them initiate a needed project and then spin it off for community resources to continue it. (The many such projects that flowed are detailed in Chapter 6, From Evangelists to Good Neighbors.)

McClernon's concern, not only for the disadvantaged but for members in his own congregation resulted in creation of the Trekkers. In 1971 McClernon wrote a letter to church members in the "over 50" group inviting them to join a ministry to those who had reached retirement age. Jenny Lee and Ann Barbee joined McClernon to knock on doors of houses in an area of three to four blocks around the church

asking, "Is there anyone here on the shelf who would like to meet with us?" A number of neighbors did join the group meeting on Thursdays at the church for a program, usually a speaker, after a light lunch. "Thursday Trekkers" seemed an appropriate name, since the group was forever taking trips—to the beach, to the malls, to sightsee. Early beach trips were financed by Paul and Becky Roberts, who offered rooms at their motels in Atlantic Beach without charge for several years. For many of the group, this was their only vacation of the year. Later a favorite destination was the beach condominium of Joe and Jenny Lee at Wrightsville Beach. In 1998 about 15 of the original Trekkers still meet on Thursdays, even though a newly formed group, Elderberries, has absorbed them into its activities as well.

Two innovations grew out of the celebration of the church's fiftieth anniversary. In 1973 Watts Street became the second church in Durham to initiate a Moravian Lovefeast for church members. Mary Ann Stone was the initiator of the Lovefeast and provided leadership for its first fifteen years. This lovely ceremony, coming out of the Home Moravian Church in Winston Salem, is a type of communion service, substituting rolls and coffee for the bread and wine. Church seamstresses sewed the white aprons and caps worn by the women serving the Lovefeast, and volunteers wrapped the beeswax candles in fringed red paper. The Lovefeast has become a feast of lights, with the candles held high at the conclusion of the service and the congregation singing "Joy to the World." This service is now an integral part of Watts Street Christmas celebrations, and is well loved by church members and visitors alike. Also in 1973 the women of the church began the Chrismon project, in which hand-made religious decorations were made for the annual Christmas tree, placed at the left of the sanctuary at the beginning of Advent each year.

With the 1960s came encounter groups; Watts Street

had its share, with both supporters and detractors. A later, more respected version of lay person support was attempted when four persons were trained in Baltimore, Maryland, to initiate the Stephens Ministry. The project was not sustained, but the Board of Deacons began to take seriously the task of lay ministry.

Beginning in 1986 WSBC undertook a wide-sweeping method to involve the congregation in long-range planning for the church. The initial committee, chaired by Roger Upchurch, Moderator, with Tom Naylor, a church member teaching at Duke's Fuqua School of Business as consultant, surveyed church members to identify problems facing the church. Twelve distinct problem areas were found; 12 committees consisting of 79 church members struggled with these concerns over the next year. From these discussions some important changes were made, all of them after McClernon left the pastorate:

1. A new covenant was developed through a democratic process of working through a committee's ideas. The final draft was written by Dr. Jim Crenshaw and Liz Morton, daughter of Bob McClernon.
2. A new form of congregational organization was adopted with the Church Council becoming the governing board of the church rather than the Board of Deacons. The Deacons continued as the pastoral care group, ministering to the needs of members of the church.
3. New members were carefully introduced to the church through a series of four orientation meetings developed by the Deacons and held during Sunday School hour. These new members were deliberately sought out for positions of service within the church.

On the twentieth anniversary of the pastorate of Bob McClernon the church paid tribute to his leadership. In his sermon that morning, titled "The Road Not Taken," McClernon summed up the growth of the church during those twenty years and then concluded:

We have not come by these [achievements] easily. These two decades have been tumultuous ones in our city and nation and world. And in Watts Street Baptist Church. We have experienced a great deal of conflict. The seas were on occasion so rough and raging that some doubted the old ark could hold together. We have paid the price of living on a frontier, of not taking the easy way, of refusing to conform to the pattern set by the religious majority.

There are those members at Watts Street who say that McClernon's most important contribution to their lives was neither his societal concerns nor his sermons, but his one-on-one counseling, which he did with great skill and compassion for many church members. In addition, McClernon provided counseling and mentoring to young seminarians serving as interns at WSBC. Shortly after his arrival in 1965, McClernon recommended hiring a student intern on a part-time basis, not only to help the youth program, but also to strengthen the caliber of young ministers going out to serve Southern Baptist churches. Since that time, the church has had a succession of fine young seminarians to work with the educational program at WSBC and to experience a different Baptist way.

After the celebration of his twenty years at WSBC, McClernon determined that the remainder of his active ministry should be carried out in a context other than one provided by a local church. He was ready to move to a different setting for this calling, but the church was not ready to let him go. Because of the on-going nature of the long-range

planning process, the church prevailed on him to stay one more year. That year was difficult: his undeviating devotion to what he understood as God's demand for Christian living as modeled by Jesus increasingly separated him from a congregation that was all too human. Feeling satisfaction in his counseling role, McClernon had been volunteering in the Adult Admissions Unit one day a week at John Umstead State Hospital for the Mentally Ill at Butner and decided he would pursue a second career as social worker. He assumed he needed another degree and applied to the University of North Carolina School of Social Work, but, much to his surprise, his experience in pastoral counseling enabled him to be hired at Umstead when an entry-level social worker position opened.

When McClernon left Watts Street, the bulletin for his last Sunday contained this tribute:

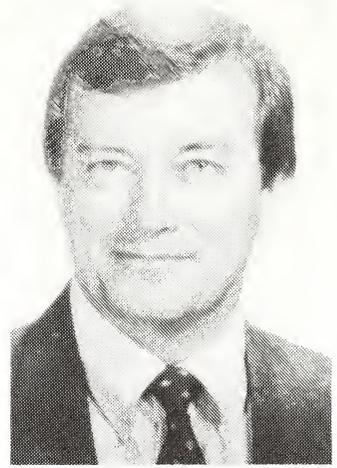
We embarked on a journey of 22 years with this dedicated man as our pilot. The way has not been a smooth one, but Bob's piercing honesty has strengthened us and moved us as individuals and as a congregation to take the Christian stance on many difficult issues.

To support the search for a new pastor, the church conducted a general survey of membership, which gathered statistics from the prior three years, 1985-87:

Number of members	1050-1060
Attendance at worship	250-280
Number of members belonging to church 10+ years	73%
Number of members living 5+ miles from church	75%
Growth in budget in 3 years	\$215,000 to \$247,000

Williams Pastorate, 1988-present. To succeed McClernon, the Watts Street Baptist Church chose a pastor who already had a reputation for leading his church to become involved in meeting human need. In Atlanta the

church found T. Melvin Williams, Jr., pastor of the Oakhurst Baptist Church, a politically homogeneous congregation of socially concerned members located near Emory University. Williams chose to leave this congenial congregation and come to Watts Street specifically because of the diversity of its membership, with the more conservative, business-oriented members balancing the liberal University crowd.



Melvin Williams

In coming to Watts Street, Williams returned to home territory, having graduated from Wake Forest University and served ten years as Associate Minister at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh. His Master of Divinity degree is from Yale University.

A gregarious extrovert, Williams is energetic about both congregational and civic causes. Williams has said his pastorate is guided by three principles:

- Every member is a minister.
- The church exists for the sake of those who are not members.
- No issue is too controversial to face.

During Williams' tenure, the church has continued its emphasis on congregational democracy. The re-writing of the church covenant is a case in point. Initial ideas, which came from brainstorming by a number of member groups, were shaped by two church members, and then returned to the congregation for final revision through group input. Williams has also expanded congregational participation in the worship service. A weekly worship planning committee meets to provide feedback on the prior Sunday service and to plan for the next Sunday. Lay leadership is often used in the pulpit, not only as liturgists and scripture readers, but for

talks during "Minute for Missions," or on stewardship Sundays. Church leadership has spent time and effort in an attempt to evoke the spiritual gifts of members. Williams himself often adds a distinctive touch to the worship service by singing the Psalms (after all, they were written as songs) or the benediction in his fine solo tenor.

During these years of the Williams pastorate the church has seen an influx of families with young children. To accommodate them, Watts Street hired Diane Hill, an ordained minister and a public school counselor, as a part-time Minister with Children in 1992. A Committee on Staffing recommended in 1997 that a part-time Minister with Youth also be added to the staff. Lee Canipe, who had served as student intern, assumed that position for 1997-98.

Growing out of the work of the Long Range Planning committees was a recommendation to change to the Church Council form of government, releasing the Board of Deacons to provide pastoral care. This recommendation was put into effect shortly after Williams arrived.

A new category of church membership was inaugurated in 1996, which made it possible to be a Friend, but not a full-fledged member, of Watts Street Baptist Church. The designation as Friend encompasses those who participate in WSBC activities without being members, such as those here temporarily, the spouses of members who belong elsewhere but participate here, those who are actively involved here but whose spiritual roots are elsewhere, those who are active in missions projects but do not wish to become members, and college-age children of members who participate when home.

Through the McClernon years Watts Street had concentrated on local mission projects, with only a few overseas. In the ten years that Williams has been at Watts Street the church has greatly expanded its overseas mission field. Watts Street has sent groups to work on houses and build

cinder block chapels in Venezuela and Brazil and has a sister church in San Ramon, Nicaragua. The church has also established relationships with a Baptist church in Durham's sister city, Kostroma, Russia. Another form of Watts Street Baptist's involvement with world missions, the One World Market, buys items produced by low-income artisans in more than 50 Third World countries and returns a majority of the profits to the craftspersons.

On the other hand, the church has not neglected Durham. At a church "town meeting" in 1995 a suggestion was made that the church undertake a local mission that would involve church-wide participation. The response of the Board of Mission was the Walltown "Neighbor to Neighbor" project. Church members are involved in tutoring programs, the development of garden plots, sprucing up the playground, and community-wide picnics. Since 1996 Williams has met twice monthly with African American pastors from Walltown churches. When the church recently approved a \$450,000 capital improvement program, they included a tithe of \$45,000 for the mission project in Walltown.

Williams has encouraged individual members of the congregation who are interested in beginning a missions project to "sound the call" from the pulpit on Sunday morning. Others who are interested in the project are invited to come to the front of the church after the service and sign up to help. In addition to providing support for on-going local missions, such calls have resulted in new projects for sufferers from AIDS, for the underprivileged Edgemont Community, a market for crafts from third-world countries, and a cross-town partnership with First Calvary Baptist Church, which is predominantly black.

Williams is very active in community affairs. With church member Leslie Dunbar, Williams launched the

Religious Coalition for a Non-Violent Durham, originally to work for restrictions on the possession and use of handguns. The group also sponsors "Vigils Against Violence" following each death from gun violence. He has served as chair of the Committee on Baptist Studies at Duke Divinity School, the group that initiated the Baptist House of Studies program at Duke. He has spoken out against the Gulf War and capital punishment and for the merger of the predominantly white county schools with the primarily black city schools. In 1992 he served as president of Durham Congregations in Action and was in that year identified as Tarheel of the Week by the *Raleigh News and Observer*.

As in the past, not all Watts Street members agree with all of their pastor's stands. In 1992 when Pullen Memorial and Olin T. Binkley churches were expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention for their stand on homosexuality, Williams proposed sending them congregational letters of support reaffirming their autonomy as local churches. In spite of a summer forum and Deacons' retreat on issues related to homosexuality, there was a significant negative reaction to the four-sentence letters. Williams withdrew the letters from the church as a whole, but provided an easy way for those in favor to send individual letters to the churches.

The seventy-fifth anniversary is being celebrated in the midst of a major addition to the back of the church, an elevator tower to accommodate the physically infirm, and the renovation of the downstairs educational wing. The \$500,000 total price tag was quite easily pledged by church members, who have been experiencing a buoyant economy for a long period. Also a general endowment fund has been established, supplementing the existing memorial funds, to ensure the church's financial stability for the future. Watts Street has grown up and is just now experiencing her maturity with a self-assured identity and an authentic character that acts out her beliefs.

CHAPTER FOUR

Embracing the Future: Bringing About Change



From the early 1950s Watts Street Baptist Church has been regarded by the old guard Southern Baptist Churches as a “maverick,” or even a “rebel.” Taking seriously the fundamental principles of the Baptist denomination, particularly the principle of the autonomy of the local church, Watts Street has gone its own way, despite a growing fury among some traditional Southern Baptists.

And that way has not been easy as the church struggled to find consensus among the members of its own diverse congregation.

The first sign that Watts Street was not going to rest easily in the Southern Baptist bosom came when Warren Carr began to question the usual practice of holding a week or more of revival meetings at least once each year and sometimes twice. In early 1950 Durham Baptist churches questioned Watts Street about whether they were planning a revival week, and if not, charged that they were failing to cooperate with other Baptists. In a discussion with Watts Street Deacons, Carr affirmed his willingness to hold a revival if that was what the Deacons wanted, but argued that the Watts Street system of making each worship service a “revival service” and inviting any person to join the church at the close of every Sunday morning service was superior to an annual push for saved souls during a revival. The Deacons concurred. Revivals were not held again at WSBC until

1986-88, when two were held in the three-year period.

A second source of disagreement between local Baptists and Watts Street was the matter of starting new churches within the geographical area needed to support an existing Baptist church which opposed the extension. In 1949 and 1952 the Deacons voted to urge the Durham Baptist Council to support new existing churches rather than beginning others and threatened to withdraw financial support from the Council if the practice continued.

In the 1960s the controversies heated up and became more numerous. Two issues became history-making, and one of those flared unsettled throughout the state for more than a dozen years. The issues were: first, Watts Street's decision to treat women as fully qualified to serve God, both as ordained ministers and as Deacons, and second, the decision to accept the baptism of persons transferring membership from another church without requiring immersion. A third issue, dual alignment with the American Baptist Church, arose from Watts Street's response to its difficulties with Southern Baptists.

Women and the Church. In the early days of WSBC women were active in W.M.S., the Women's Missionary Society, but had no power jobs. However, as early as 1953 the Deacons heard "sentiment among the ladies of the church favorable to naming Deaconesses to their board." No action was taken until a decade later. In 1964 Watts Street ordained a woman minister, the first for Southern Baptist churches. In 1966 the church ordained a woman Deacon.

The ordination issue arose in 1962 when Addie Davis, a third year student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, told Warren Carr she had felt a call to the ministry since she was a small girl. Would he help her become ordained? She had been attending services at Watts Street for several months before approaching Carr about ordination.

Davis said that since graduating from Meredith College in 1942, she had served in a number of church jobs, e.g., Minister of Education and Baptist Student Union Director, those then considered proper for women, but they left her unfulfilled. During a serious illness she had promised God that, if she lived, she would become a minister. At Southeastern, she had received encouragement and support from both faculty and students. As she neared completion of her seminary studies she began sounding out Southern Baptist churches for a possible call as a minister after ordination.

She met a stone wall.

Even her home church in Covington, Virginia, rejected her. Four generations of her family had attended that church, but the pastor was opposed to women ministers. When she wrote a letter designed to inform the entire church of her plans, the pastor took it to the Board of Deacons instead of letting the church as a whole become aware of her desires.

Warren Carr, believing in the "priesthood of believers" both male and female, was receptive to her ordination but made certain stipulations, the first being that she join WSBK. Then he added, "I'm open to your ordination. After these people get to know you, we will discuss the possibilities at greater length. I do think, however, that we should not formally ordain you until you have had a call to serve a particular church as minister."

On March 16, 1963, Watts Street Baptist Church licensed Addie Davis to preach. Finally, friends in the American Baptist Convention recommended her to the First Baptist Church of Readsboro, Vermont, a church that previously had had women pastors. She then had to pass the examining council of the Baptist Association in Durham.

Carr sounded out the council, telling them "I will simply organize my own examining council out of my church if you

are going to have prejudice beforehand.” They assured him they would not be prejudiced. That day a young man was examined first. He stood a lousy examination theologically, Carr remembers.

Then came Addie, and she was superb. When they asked her about the Virgin birth, and those kinds of arguments, she came through with flying colors. Then, as you might expect, the old prejudices began to rise. When we were discussing approving Addie, two gentlemen said they couldn’t do it, that she was a woman and they couldn’t break precedent. I think what turned it around was the comment of a young Duke student who was an ordained minister himself: “Brethren, I’ve never been on this kind of thing before. I’m a little confused. You gentlemen have been so concerned that our candidates believe without question that a Virgin bore the Word. Now you are hung up on a virgin preaching the Word.” We took a vote. Bingo. We passed her.

Since the first ordination of a woman in 1964, Watts Street has ordained six other women. They are: Lisa Grabarek Matthews in 1974; Nancy Stanton in 1977; Andrea O’Connell in 1986; Carole Jackson Cothran in 1989; LeDayne McLeese Polaski in 1993; and Beth Toler in 1998.

Responding to a recommendation from the W.M.S. that women be allowed to serve on their Board, in 1961 the Deacons agreed that women were eligible. In fact, pushed by Chris Hamlet, they went farther than that: they increased the membership of the board by six, all of whom were to be women, two to be elected in subsequent years. The Deacons nominated five respected, older women to the Board at that time, but only one officially accepted the nomination (a second nominee had telephoned the office an acceptance just before the meeting). The Deacons then voted to rescind their

former action to place women on the board.

A nominating group favoring women Deacons then turned to the younger women to find those willing to serve. It took four years. In this period the Deacons ran the church and selected their own members, although with congregational approval. Although any member of the church could nominate a candidate for Deacon, the Board selected the final slate. In October, 1965, the naming of Deacons led to 58 nominations and took five ballots to select a slate. From that selection Delores Atkins became the first woman elected Deacon who agreed to serve; she was ordained in 1966. A year later the ordination of Beth Upchurch followed. Only four other churches in the local Yates Baptist Association had ordained a woman Deacon by 1966.

Hamlet, who was very active in the drive to have women Deacons, says that as they were finishing the voting another Deacon leaned over and said to him, "You're nothing but a woman-lover." Which, Hamlet says, he readily admitted.

Jean Fletcher, the former Jean Dula, who was Director of Christian Education in the 1950s, was, in 1976, the first woman elected by the Board of Deacons as Chairperson. At her last meeting to preside, McClernon expressed personal gratitude for her outstanding performance as Chairperson, saying that many were watching Jean, since she was one of only two females that had served as Deacon Chairpersons of Southern Baptist churches.

* * *

For almost a decade two issues had been a source of dissension and difficulty for Watts Street Baptist Church; these were 1) immersion as a requirement for membership and 2) admission of African Americans to church membership without requiring that they meet with the Board of Deacons to certify their intentions. The group that managed to cut these Gordian knots was the Committee on the

Church and Its Ministry, chaired by Vivian Parks, who had served ten years before as chair of the Spiritual Life Committee. After almost two years of study, this committee made two very important recommendations: 1) that the Deacons' policy about Negro membership be discussed with the congregation (as it never had been) and rescinded, (for further discussion of this issue see Chapter 5, Opening the Doors to Integration) and 2) that the church offer open membership, not requiring immersion for persons previously baptized.

Immersion as a Requirement for Membership. A big issue was fermenting at WSBC in 1961. Watts Street had always strictly required baptism by immersion as the means by which the Baptist principle, baptism of believers, could be sustained. The original sanctuary (see p. 12) provided a lighted baptismal font with a wall mural of trees and blue sky, representing the River Jordan, high above the choir loft. The requirement of immersion gave rise to a distinctly embarrassing situation in the early years, when Deacon and major benefactor of the church, A. K. (Major) Draughon reported that his baptismal records had been burned in a fire in his home church in Sampson County, N.C. The church refused to recognize Draughon as a member unless he was baptized again, and he refused to do this. For a while, feelings were bitter when Draughon had forbidden his wife and children from officially joining the church until it recognized him as a member. Finally, the church decided they needed his support and taking his word that he had been baptized, received him as a church member by statement. In 1998 the Church Council voted to add the names of Major Draughon and his wife to the list of charter members, since the policy had changed to permit persons who had been baptized but not immersed to become members.

Then, in 1961, from a surprising quarter came a resolution that would prove the most disruptive of all the calls for change. Twenty-five members of the Ruth Bible Class,

young wives and mothers, signed a letter to the Board of Deacons containing the resolution that WSBC accept into membership all confirmed Christians without requiring a second baptism. In response, the Deacons set up a study committee. They studied a long time. When Warren Carr left the church in 1964, this was one of several still unsettled questions.

Finally, in 1968, a broad-ranging committee, the Committee on Church and Its Ministry, chaired by well-respected Vivian Parks, was charged to study the question, among many others. The committee returned the recommendation that, although immersion remained the means by which non-baptized persons joined WSBC, the church admit to membership baptized persons who had not been immersed:

the three ways that a person can become a member are baptism by immersion; transfer of letter from a church with evidence of baptism by immersion or another mode if that baptism is meaningful to the candidate; and by statement of the candidate, if a letter cannot be obtained.

This resolution passed the Board of Deacons by a vote of 12 in favor, 5 opposed, and 1 abstention. H.C. Bradshaw and Herman Rhinehart requested the record show their vote was cast in opposition to the motion. (Within a few years, both had left the church.) The committee recommended that all church school classes study the issue in January, 1969, with the opportunity to discuss the change, and a congregational vote be taken in February. At that time, the resolution passed.

Reaction throughout the Southern Baptist Convention was immediate and harsh. Watts Street faced a storm of rejection, particularly within their own association and state convention in the early '70s. The necessity of complete immersion in water to "wash away your sins" is an old Baptist

tradition. The Yates Baptist Association sought to punish Watts Street for no longer requiring immersion for those joining from another denomination. In October, 1969, the Association voted to study all membership policies of all churches in the Association; however, the newly elected moderator interpreted that motion to imply that "a study of membership policies other than the question of the proper mode of baptism would not be germane and consequently out of order," i.e., the only church to be studied would be Watts Street. The Deacons were puzzled as to how a motion passed two months before could be ruled out of order.

Hubert Mumford, Associational Missionary of the Yates Baptist Association, asked pastor Bob McClernon to meet with all pastors of the Association to discuss the "concern many of them have about this church's decision for open membership." McClernon declined to go to such a meeting alone and deferred to the Board of Deacons for a decision. They suggested that rather than meeting with all of the ministers in a Star Chamber proceeding, the church suggest a meeting with the Executive Committee, which would include lay persons. The actual meeting finally occurred with Mumford alone, though McClernon was accompanied by Floyd Fletcher and Vivian Parks.

The Yates Association tried again in 1971, when it considered a by-laws change that would allow only immersed believers to serve as messengers to the Association, but the proposal failed. When, in 1973, the Association "required" that churches report as members only those who have been immersed, the Deacons refused. They decided to leave blank the total number of immersed members, stating,

We believe that for us to voluntarily deduct or willfully make possible the deduction from our membership as reported any persons whom we consider to be members

in good standing would be a breach of our covenant with them, a serious compromise of this congregation's integrity, and a violation of the spirit of Christian love.

For the next six years Watts Street's membership numbers were not listed in the Yates Association annual report. Amazingly, in the year of the big dispute, 1973, the Deacons voted to send Yates Association \$200 to buy the Association's Hubert Mumford a new car. The Association finally dropped the issue with WSBC.

In the meantime, back at the church, many bruising discussions had occurred before these decisions were made. But in spite of the differences, McClernon was able to call the Deacons' attention to

one of the greatest boons of all—something that is surely the work of the Spirit—the growing discovery that we can speak with honesty, even with anger, and remain together. Here I must speak of my deep gratitude for what has transpired in this Board during the past year....My reference is to the open and vigorous conversations on matters having penultimate if not ultimate significance....We can now, if we choose to do so, speak to each other as Christian brothers in a fashion which was not possible twelve months ago.

But then the battle was taken up in the North Carolina Baptist Convention, where, in 1971, delegates debated a motion to change the Constitution of the Convention to define a cooperating church as one which practices "believer's baptism by immersion only, thus consisting of immersed professed believers in Jesus Christ." The motion was narrowly defeated. In 1973 the N.C. Baptist Convention set up a Committee of 11, authorized to meet with the twelve Baptist churches in the state that permitted membership with-

out immersion. In response, McClernon drafted a statement, which was affirmed by the Deacons, stating the reasons for the church's practice. A strong committee of four, Bob Stone, Floyd Fletcher, Vivian Parks, and McClernon, met with the Committee of 11 to explain the statement. It argued that requiring re-baptism before a non-Baptist could join the church "robbed the baptism of other Christians of its meaning. We saw that we had unwittingly created a situation in which baptism could too often be looked upon as a mere rite of entrance into a local church." McClernon added, "We cannot with integrity say that only those baptized by immersion have been baptized. That puts us in the intolerable position of saying that 95 per cent of the Christians in the world are not Christians."

In November of that year the Baptist State Convention debated the immersion question for an hour and a quarter before the vote to require immersion by all churches sending messengers to the convention. The vote was 1300 opposed and 1200 in favor. In 1988 the state convention again debated, but did not pass, a motion preventing non-immersed members from serving on boards of conventions and agencies, including hospitals, children's homes, retirement homes and the six Baptist colleges.

Dual Alignment with the American Baptists. In the 1960s several Sunday School classes, dissatisfied with the educational materials provided by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, had adopted curricula written by the American Baptist Convention, the "northern Baptists," with central offices in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and summer educational facilities in Green Lake, Wisconsin. The prospect of becoming aligned with the American Baptist Convention, as well as with the Southern Baptist Convention, was first considered by the Deacons in 1961, upon a motion by A. C. Sorrell. At that time, a committee, chaired by Howard Strobel, was appointed to study the issue. All told, the term

of service for that committee was six years, during which time the church changed ministers.

Warren Carr did not view expansion to the American Baptist Convention as an unmixed blessing, as he pointed out in his "Random Observations," distributed in 1962:

I suggest that the church be exceedingly deliberate about its decision in this matter. I am impressed that very little evidence has been uncovered that suggests our church's witness in the world would be intensified or enlarged by dual alignment with the two major Baptist Conventions. This is particularly true because affiliation with American Baptists may reduce our influence among Southern Baptists to an undesirable degree.

However, in March, 1963, Clifford Hansen of the American Baptist Mission Society met with the Board of Deacons and assured them that the American Baptists do not actively seek membership in the South, but that a dual alignment would increase the scope and effectiveness of the mission of the church. The committee issued a report favorable to dual alignment, citing these reasons:

Because of the articulateness and vigor of our continuing ministry and our program of Christian education, while working with the Yates Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Convention, we have taken on some of the character of a "local" church. There is a felt need—a hunger—for more challenge than the Yates Association and the Southern Baptist Convention have offered. The Southern Baptist program seems not to speak effectively in many areas to our spiritual position. In part, this failure to offer challenge is a result of the fact that the Watts Street Baptist Church seeks to be "inclusive," i.e., we seek to be against "indrawn" attitudes. It

also has to do with the fact that educationally we often find a need to supplement and enrich Southern Baptist materials and training programs.

The committee recommendation to look forward to establishing a relationship with the American Baptist Convention in 1964 led to Carr's asking the Deacons in July to decide whether or not to proceed with steps leading to dual alignment. On motion by Herbert C. Bradshaw, the Deacons voted to advise the American Baptist Convention that the church did not feel it advisable to pursue dual alignment further.

However, with a change of pastors, the question was revisited: in August, 1965, Robert McClernon wrote to the American Baptists to reopen the possibility of WSBC becoming dually aligned. This time the Deacons concurred with the committee's recommendation that the congregation should vote on the question. In October, 1967, committee members spent a full Sunday School class hour discussing the recommendation with class members. Reasons presented for seeking dual affiliation were:

1. To demonstrate the unity of all followers of Jesus Christ.
2. In a logical expression of the pioneer spirit of WSBC, to move beyond narrowly-defined denominational boundaries.
3. To overcome geographical stereotypes that divide Baptists by honest exploration of similarities and differences within the Baptist family.
4. To enlarge the range of resources available to this congregation, particularly in the area of Christian education and evangelism.

In November, 1967, the church voted to become aligned with the American Baptist Convention, and on January 1, 1969,

Watts Street Baptist Church became dually aligned.

Biblical Inerrancy. In the early 80s the issue of literal interpretation of the scriptures was used by the Southern Baptist hierarchy as a litmus test of faith, with the consequent determination to rid seminaries of all professors who would not assert their belief in Biblical inerrancy. Early in 1982 the church passed a Resolution Concerning the Individual Baptist Right and Duty to Search for Biblical Truth. This resolution called on the State Baptist Convention to reaffirm their belief in the historic Baptist doctrine of the individual's right to study and learn the meaning of the Bible and asked the Convention to censure leaders who wished to require individual professors of theology to adhere to the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy on pain of dismissal if their interpretations of the Bible differed from this doctrine.

Homosexuality and the Church. In the early 1992 the question of the church's attitude toward homosexuality came to the forefront, especially in the cases of Watts Street sister churches, Pullen Memorial in Raleigh and Olin T. Binkley in Chapel Hill. The issues raised by Binkley (should a homosexual be ordained?) and by Pullen (should a minister perform a homosexual marriage?) were never addressed directly by Watts Street. When pastor Mel Williams sought to send a letter of support to these churches, who had taken liberal stances, many in the congregation objected. Letters were then sent in the name of individual church members, not the church as a whole. The Adult Education Committee, in response to these homosexuality issues, organized a summer forum study of the questions, followed by neighborhood discussion groups in members' homes, which were led by carefully trained discussion leaders. When some members questioned the need for such a study, the committee responded with a statement that summarizes the church's attitude toward disagreements within the church:

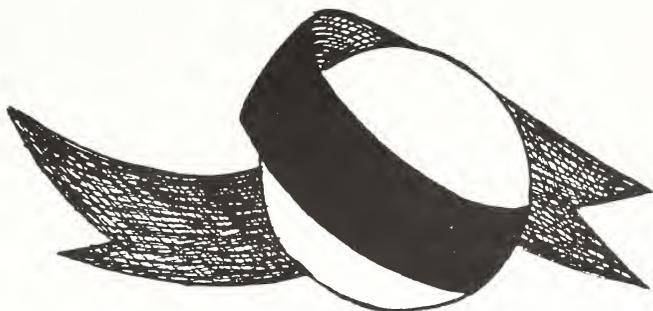
We recognize that there are legitimate differ-

ences of opinion about homosexuality among Christians of good will, all of whom hold the bible as their religious authority. We do not expect that any unanimous consensus will result from our study. Nevertheless, we hope that the power of love within our church community would transcend any differences that emerge. We must protect the right to dissent within our church, should a vote on some policy eventually result in a majority that disagrees with a minority. At this point, it is impossible to know what "majority" and "minority" on the questions relating to homosexuality stand for at WSBC. Yet, what we want to affirm at the beginning of our study is that any minority view will be protected and respected, that the minority will always have the right to urge reconsideration of the question, and that disagreement with a church vote does not mean the dissenter leaves the church. Our Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church should be extended to autonomy of the individual conscience.

Let us here...affirm our commitment to our brothers and sisters in Christ here at Watts Street. Let us search together, each in our own individual way, for the "mind that is in Christ" as it applies to homosexuality. Let us pledge to each other our love and respect in the most difficult of times.

Surprising the committee, the four Forum presentations on homosexuality were very popular, drawing overflow crowds in the midst of the summer. The Board of Deacons met in a retreat setting to study how they might deal with the issue if it came up in their ministry to congregational members. The result of these efforts was an increased openness within the congregation that led to new members who felt comfortable with the congregational "Don't ask, don't tell" attitude.

CHAPTER FIVE



Opening the Doors to Integration

For Watts Street Baptist Church, as well as for Durham and the entire country, the most tension-frought issue of the past 75 years has been the issue of integration. The struggle to achieve a consensus toward change in the segregated patterns of the past was difficult for the church. Nevertheless, alone among the mainline churches of Durham, Watts Street, from the very beginning, has been an open church. However, the membership of Watts Street has included businessmen and professionals, whose basic instincts were quite conservative, as well as liberal students and professors from Duke University. When Warren Carr was asked how it was possible for these two groups to agree on the forward-looking stances they finally took, he responded:

When I arrived in 1946, the congregation considered themselves "liberal," but their definition of liberal meant liberal about certain moral issues, rather than social issues: they meant they wanted to do things like dancing, drinking, playing cards, and golf on Sunday without being preached at. But you see, they were open. They

were open to some kind of change. Then with the influx of Duke people, faculty and students, this whole business of social action began to assert itself, so while they were not terribly happy with what took place, they were gritty, great people. And we understood each other completely. I knew that I was going too fast for them; they knew that I would not stay with a segregated church. We tried to be civil with each other. The chairman of the school board, for example, was a member of my church, and he was a confirmed segregationist so far as public education was concerned. When I became chairman of the mayor's Committee on Human Relations, we knocked heads all the time. But that never destroyed our relationship as friends and never destroyed our fellowship as brothers in Christ in the church. So I would say this church had a liberal spirit which former ministers had not caught and built on.

When pushed to further explain why the church stood behind its fire-breathing minister, against the wishes of Durham citizens, Carr continued:

Other churches in Durham would tell us, "You're letting the bars down." The church wasn't happy that I was putting a lot of pressure on it, but they told those people to mind their own business time and again. Downtown businessmen and civic club members would even say, "Why don't you get rid of your preacher? If you'd get rid of your preacher, all of this would go away." And our people were steadfast. They'd say, "We'll deal with our preacher. You paddle your own canoe." And those weren't the Duke people; they were the bankers and lawyers and doctors and business people.

You ask why that happened. Watts Street did not start out as a mission church. The founders

pulled out of their own churches and said, "We are not getting the gospel; we're not getting faith. Where we go to church, they're playing church. Let's have us a church." Then the Depression hit them, right after they started, right after they'd built that first building. Oh, they were terribly in debt. Some of those people took mortgages on their own homes to pay off that church. So they were tough. And they were the church. I think that Watts Street Baptist is the church that God raised up for that day.

Very soon after Warren Carr arrived at Watts Street Baptist in 1946 the membership showed signs of breaking through the segregationist policies that were normal for all Durham churches at that time. The Board of Deacons gave several positive responses to requests from integrated groups to use the church building, requests that other churches were routinely turning down. In February, 1949, the Deacons unanimously approved a request from the state Baptist Student Union to use the church building for a 2-day integrated retreat. Again, in February, 1954, students from Shaw University (a black college in Raleigh) were invited to participate in a meeting of the Baptist Student Union at Watts Street church, followed by attendance at the evening worship service.

However, in that same year, after the Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown Vs. the Board of Education outlawed separate but equal schools, some dissension over the question of integration did occur within the church. A committee was appointed to study the policy regarding open church membership; that committee consisted of: C.T. Council, E.B. Cranford, A. Derwin Cooper, H.C. Bradshaw, and Warren Carr. On September 20, 1954, the Board of Deacons unanimously passed the resolution on church membership brought to them by this committee:

Should an occasion arise wherein a Negro

should present himself for membership at one of the Sunday worship services without previous communication of this desire to the Church, the pastor shall invite a motion from the members that the matter be referred to the Board of Deacons for consideration.

The intent of this resolution was to make sure that any African American who asked for membership was doing so with personal integrity and not simply to prove a political point. However, some church members called it "a Jim Crow membership policy with two tracks, one for blacks and one for whites." The church was never asked to take action on this policy; it was simply explained at business meetings where an apparent consensus was reached.

Eight years later at a church meeting in 1962 Charles Wellborn, a well-known Baptist minister having served in Texas and Florida and then a member of Watts Street Baptist Church, moved "that all persons regardless of race who present themselves for membership be treated in the same way." Attorney Horton Poe moved to table the motion, and by a vote of 93 to 18, Poe's motion passed. Warren Carr, troubled by this action, investigated the context of the two motions and wrote the following in an open letter to the congregation:

My first step was a letter to Mr. Bradshaw, Moderator, and Mr. Parks, Chairman of the Board, voicing personal dismay if this were an evasive action by the church and approval if it were in the interest of calm deliberation....Correspondence and conversation with Mr. Poe and Mr. Wellborn helped form two definite opinions. First, Mr. Poe's motion was made in the interest of calm deliberation. He felt that Mr. Wellborn's motion was ill advised and untimely. Secondly, the entire situation was much more amicable than at first seemed apparent. Both Mr. Poe and Mr. Wellborn were, and still are, concerned for the welfare

of the church and its ministry.

I believe that the policy adopted by the Official Board is realistic, wise, and Christian...My reasons for this opinion are as follows: (1) This means that the church is not one which excludes members by virtue of race or similar distinctions. (2) It deals honestly, openly, and realistically with a difficult situation. To treat a matter that is unusual, embarrassing the conditioned emotions and attitudes of southern people both Negro and white, as if it were not unusual is unrealistic and unwise. Although under usual conditions this procedure cannot be called the most Christian one, it is better to accept this judgment upon ourselves and move toward the higher ethical level with a sense of compromise at a slower pace than some may desire but which conserves our progress and does not retreat from our present position....(3) All Christians have a responsibility that the church be the church. An inclusive church must beckon all races....

In 1963 the Board of Deacons considered a motion to take the question of church membership for an African American to the entire congregation to give church members an opportunity to cast a negative vote. The motion was defeated. In the next year, 1964, the Board of Deacons denied the use of the sanctuary to the Durham Ministerial Association for an interracial service. But the fire died down, and four years later in 1968, the policy that required any black person's membership to be considered by the Board of Deacons was rescinded with only one dissenting vote.

Although several blacks who regularly attended services were invited to become members, no African American ever asked for membership in Watts Street Baptist during those years. However, blacks did test the waters, as they did at many Durham churches, with a "kneel-in." Five blacks came to attend a Sunday morning worship service in the late 1950s. Because the church was already full, John Stone,

who was ushering that morning, seated them in the balcony. When they protested, John told them that if they would come on time, he would seat them anywhere they wished. They returned the next Sunday and were seated on the front row. After that second visit there were no more. During the same period 15 or 20 blacks arrived to attend worship at the First Baptist Church. There the Deacons made a human chain around the church and barred the door so the blacks could not get in.

Both the church and the Carr family felt pressure from members of the Durham community, as they resisted Watts Street's openness. The parsonage, which was immediately back of the church in what is now the parking lot, was bombed in the early 1960s. Although the instigator of the bombing was motivated by personal reasons, his accomplices were inspired by anti-segregation feelings. No one was hurt badly, although Carr did suffer a hearing loss from it, and the bomb blasted out a window.

The message that was left at the church was less dangerous, but more explicit. Warren Carr remembers vividly:

One Friday morning Marion, the custodian, came to my office early and said, "Mr. Carr, better come out here and look what somebody's done to the front door." In those days the doors were off-white in color. I went out and saw that somebody had painted in big letters—oil paint—"Go to hell, you nigger lover." Marion asked, "What do you want me to do?" I told him to get some white paint and see if he could paint it out. So he painted over the words. Saturday morning when I got to the office, Marion was waiting for me. "Brother Carr," he said, "they've been back." This time the words on the door read, "Go to hell, you nigger-lovin' Warren Carr." Marion asked, "What do you want me to do?" I replied, "Oh, paint it out." Sunday morning Marion was

again waiting for me. He said, "They came back again, Brother Carr. You want me to paint it over?" I said, "Let's go look at it." That morning they'd written, "Go to hell, you nigger-lovin' church." Marion had his paint bucket and his brush, and he started to paint. But I said, "You know that's a real compliment, and when people come to worship this morning, I want the whole church to see how highly people think of them."

Not everyone in the church appreciated my humor at that moment, and they got rid of the painted words pretty quickly, but I wanted them to understand that the symbol painted on their church door was pretty doggone important....I would not go out into the community and expect of the community what I would not expect of my church. It seemed to me that the first thing that needed to be integrated was the church—not the school, not the ball team, not the restaurant, but the church. And therefore, we were church always. That's the reason that painting on that door meant so much to me. We were the church.

The church's response to the door painting was very pragmatic: they took out bomb insurance.

The Carr legacy of openness was carried on by his successor, Bob McClernon, who inaugurated Durham's first exchange of pulpits between a black church and a white church by inviting Lorenzo Lynch, pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church, to preach at Watts Street Baptist in 1966. Later that year McClernon preached at White Rock.

This exchange prompted young women belonging to Watts Street's Pilot Circle to start an integrated women's group from the two congregations. The young wives of Circle 11, a forerunner of Pilot Circle, had already, in 1960, made

their opinions known to the Board of Deacons about the need for an open policy on church membership. They wrote:

An honest facing of the question of an integrated church will bring about spiritual growth and a sense of where the moral imperative should lead us although we may not be able to achieve this ideal immediately.

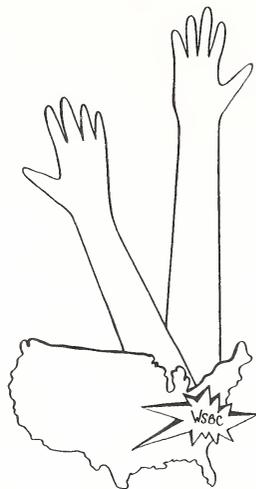
The group of women from Watts Street and White Rock met seven years later with the same ideals, in an attempt to understand each other better in terms of race. Gene Johnson from Watts Street and Lorine Lynch from White Rock were the organizing forces. At the first meeting in February, 1967, some dozen Watts Street women met with seven women from White Rock. They talked, sharing their histories, their interests, their experiences, and their faith. They were especially interested in learning about each other's racial attitudes. This in-depth sharing led them to call their group "Shared Life." In time other members were added, including women from West Durham Baptist and Pilgrim United Church of Christ. The group met monthly with about 25 members, evenly divided between blacks and whites. Once Durham schools were ordered integrated in 1969, the women felt the need for their group was not as intense as it once was. The group disbanded in May, 1974.

The first black member of Watts Street Baptist was a teenager, Steve Arrington, who had been attending Sunday School and youth fellowship regularly in 1990. His Watts Street friends encouraged Steve to apply to Guilford College, which he eventually attended. After his application was sent to Guilford, Steve was attending worship service one Sunday morning and heard the call to membership. "I felt a huge push inside me to go down the aisle," Steve recalled. "Before I realized it, I was on my feet, and then I said to myself, 'What is this you're doing?'" But he went through with his baptism and membership, and was joined within a few years by other black members.

CHAPTER SIX

From Evangelists to Good Neighbors

“Missions,” to members at Watts Street Baptist Church, has always meant the taking of the church to the world outside itself. In the early years the mission emphasis was upon evangelism and saving souls; in the past 35 years the approach to missions has focused on the church’s role in addressing both physical and spiritual human needs. Those needs have been discerned in Durham, in North Carolina, in the United States, and throughout the world. WSBC missions efforts have focused on all those venues. Since 1969 those efforts have been directed and coordinated by a Board of Mission. Before that, the principal source of support for missions was the Woman’s Missionary Union.



W.M.U. and the early years. Soon after the organization of the church in 1923, the women of the church organized their own group, the Woman’s Missionary Society. Mrs. Annie Johnson served as chairman of the organizational committee, and Mrs. B. W. Fassett was the first president. At that first meeting 69 women decided on the circle plan, which divided their group into two circles that met separately each month, with the whole group meeting together in a second monthly meeting. The purpose of the society was to study Baptist missions through programs provided by the Southern Baptist Convention. Often the group heard returned missionaries speak of their work at the general meeting. The women collected money for missions

through two all-church offerings, the Lottie Moon offering at Christmas for foreign missions, and the Annie Armstrong offering at Easter for home missions. In addition, the society members prayed for specific missionaries and their efforts.

All ages of children had their own organizations within the W.M.S. Royal Ambassadors or R.A.s were young boys, who studied missions from 1927 through at least 1940, but did not carry on for long beyond that. Of longer duration were other groups sponsored by the W.M.S.: the Sunbeams were the nursery children; the G.A.s were Girls' Auxiliary; the Young Women's Auxiliary or Y.W.A.s were teenage girls. Most Baptist churches had a Brotherhood for men's missionary activity, but WSBC men never seemed interested.

Sylvester Green was particularly enthusiastic about the early work of the W.M.S. and wrote an article for the *Biblical Recorder* in 1927 praising their work. For three years the W.M.S. had led their Baptist Association in mission study, he said; the society grew from three classes in 1923 to 23 classes in 1927. "Twenty-two women had completed Course I and 26 had completed Course II," Green reported. That same year Green recommended that the W.M.S. provide these services: caring for children in the church nursery during worship service, providing special services to children at Wright Refuge, providing books for children at Baptist orphanages, providing music at services for King's Daughters' Home, and providing flowers for church worship services. "No request for a service to the church is too great [for them]," Green commended.

The ladies of the W.M.S. were particularly inspired by the pastorate of Dr. J. T. Riddick, who "left the world better than he found it because of so many rescued souls," as they wrote in his memorial. His death was the catalyst for their establishment of a fund for the support of an additional native missionary, to be known as the Riddick Missionary of

the W.M.S. of Watts Street Baptist Church.

The growth of the W.M.S. was dramatic: from 8 circles in 1941, they grew to 11 circles in 1951, with 100 women attending the monthly meeting, and reached their peak of 12 circles in 1962, totaling about 180 members. In addition to education about missions Watts Street women reaped other benefits. For church-minded women, who were not yet free to pursue a career outside the home, there was little opportunity for leadership in the church structure or elsewhere. Joining W.M.S. was "the thing to do," and consequently, about 90-95% of the women who were church members did so. Consequently, the W.M.S. meetings became very important to them, the social events of the month. Circles were asked to provide refreshments for all joint meetings and for some all-church events, so they became involved and contributed to the wider life of the church.

In the early 1960s there were signs of change. In 1961, at a business meeting of the church, the W.M.S. became incorporated with the church and began to operate from a set of by-laws of the church as the Woman's Missionary Union or the W.M.U. Even more significantly, changes in society meant that women began to work outside their homes, limiting their time for church activity. The W.M.U. recommended to the Board of Deacons that women be elected as Deacons; this recommendation was accepted and wider possibilities for church leadership became accessible to women. As racial and social unrest invaded Durham and the Watts Street community, young women were more interested in studying social issues than the foreign missions that seemed far removed from their lives. Circle 11, acting on this impulse, requested and received permission from the leadership of W.M.U. to study current social issues rather than missions. In time, this maverick circle became the Pilot Circle, which later united with some women from White Rock Baptist Church to share life experiences between the two

aces.

Simultaneously, the church as a whole was pulling away from the Southern Baptist Convention and toward American Baptists or an independent stance. When the Southern Baptists made the popular leader of the Foreign Mission Board leave his post in the 1970s, there was much disruption, with the resulting confusion of where to invest mission money. Finally, as church members, both men and women, became more interested in where the money raised for missions should go, the newly formed Board of Mission became the primary group to provide direction for the expenditure of gifts for missions, in large part for the local community.

In 1998 the W.M.U. has three circles of older members which continue to meet. Circle 1 is missions oriented and donates money to local and world-wide missions sponsored by the Board of Mission. Circle 2 is a group of close friends who gather in members' homes monthly for lunch and are active in missions. Circle 3 is the bazaar group which sews items for the annual bazaar held each November. Proceeds from the bazaar are donated to the church: 10% to missions projects and 90% for church renovation projects (see also Chapter 9, Gracious Giving).

Work within the community. In more recent years Watts Street has built a reputation as a church concerned with meeting its own community's human, social, and spiritual needs. The reputation meshes with the facts. With the inauguration of the Board of Mission this church has placed an unusual emphasis on meeting the needs of those who live in its community.

The facilities of the church's physical plant have been an integral part of the mission effort of the church continuously since at least 1963. In 1963 the church dedicated its parsonage to use as a storage facility for Scout troops as well

as for Sunday School classes. When the parsonage was torn down, the Scouts used both the church house, next to what had been the parsonage, and the church building itself for various activities, and have ever since. In 1966 zoning problems and community concerns prevented the church from using the church house as a critically needed home for foster children.

In 1971 the church house was converted into Hassle House, a center for troubled youth from throughout the city, which grew from an idea put into practice by David May. For over ten years Hassle House operated a crisis counseling service, as well as a counseling and community center for youth involved with drugs or troubled by other problems. Hassle House closed in 1982 when governmental funding for its telephone crisis-counseling service was terminated, but it made a substantial contribution to the mental health of a generation of Durham's youth. The crisis line that Hassle House had established was then assumed by the Durham County Mental Health Center. That release of an idea and a program to a broader-based group is typical of mission efforts at Watts Street.

When Hassle House closed, the church suddenly had a building that could be used to expand its mission program. It chose to dedicate that facility for use as a shelter for homeless women. That shelter opened in 1984. The structure was officially named the W.E. Stanley Mission Center, as a memorial to the man who had served as Sunday School Superintendent and as director of social welfare programs in Durham. His widow, Flora Stanley, donated money to renovate the new Mission Center. During the shelter's operation the majority of volunteers and financial support for the shelter came from members at Watts Street. Its coordinators over its four-year history were Sally Browder, Anne Drennan, Doris McCoy, and Fred Starr. At the shelter church members encountered homeless women who were experiencing

psychotic symptoms and had nowhere to go but the state mental hospital. The outcome was Threshold Clubhouse. To provide a rehabilitation day program for the mentally ill, Threshold was begun under the auspices of the Board of Mission with the leadership of Shirley Strobel. In 1988 the homeless shelter closed when the city and county governments opened another shelter for both men and women. The Board of Mission, with the continuing leadership of Bob Jackson, began Genesis Home, a shelter for homeless families purchased with help from local governments and placed under the governance of an ecumenical, community board.

When the shelter closed, the structure was soon converted into its present use as a temporary home for outpatients at Duke Hospital or for families of patients at the hospital. It is managed by the Host Homes program at Duke Medical Center, which was started in 1977, after Joe and Jenny Lee took into their home a family with an ill member at Duke Hospital, who could not afford a lengthy stay at a motel. Jenny and Trish Stewart put into place a continuing Host Homes program, which has been managed by Christine Stocks for many years. In 1980 Chris Hamlet launched Mediport, a transportation ministry to help people get to important medical appointments.

In addition to the Mission House, the educational wing of the church has also been actively used to further mission projects. In 1959 the Association for Retarded Citizens received permission to use several rooms for their classes for the developmentally handicapped and continued this use until 1970. Since 1965 a Durham Nursery School Association day care center has been housed in the church. In the 1970s a Mother's Morning Out program was housed in the church nursery. Triangle Hospice also used vacant offices in the church for its first offices in the early 1980s until it could find permanent quarters. When Hospice left, it was replaced in 1982 by the Dispute Settlement Center of Durham, which

stayed until 1988, when it found more suitable quarters. For most of the 1980s the church served as the headquarters for a program in which child car seats were loaned to parents unable to purchase them.

The mission continues today. On any given week several outside groups will likely be found using the church building for meetings, including the Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the Duke Baptist House of Studies, the Duke Institute for Learning in Retirement, Habitat for Humanity, and the Trinity Park Association.

The list of social ministries started by Watts Street members with the encouragement of its ministers goes beyond those associated with the Mission House. In 1975 Charlotte Sorrell and the Board of Missions joined Trinity Methodist Church members to initiate the city-wide ministry, Meals-on-Wheels, which delivers a noon-day meal for the elderly and home bound. Also in the 1970s Hugh Dover was instrumental in founding CONTACT, a telephone ministry and crisis counseling service, using trained volunteers with back up from local pastors. The Durham chapter of Habitat for Humanity was born at WSBC in the late 1980s through the efforts of Dick Chorley, its first president, and Worth Lutz, construction manager and all-purpose volunteer extraordinaire, who still oversees construction of homes for families who could not otherwise afford them. Many, many Watts Street volunteers have spent their Saturdays working side-by-side with community volunteers to build well over fifty homes. In 1991 60 church members participated in this mission group. The church budget regularly contributes to the construction costs of these homes. One World Market, now a thriving non-profit commercial outlet for artisans in poor countries, began as a Christmas shop in 1986 in the basement of WSBC. Jan Williams and Cindy Adcock shepherded its growth into a beautiful shop just off Ninth Street. All of these enterprises are now run by community-

wide organizations and play an important role in meeting basic human needs. An AIDS mission group, initiated by a pulpit "call to missions" from Ginny Chorley, led to the idea of a network among churches, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, to provide shelter to the homeless in the 1990s.

Other efforts have involved outreach programs to disadvantaged neighborhoods. This is difficult work, as those in the faith community seek to be helpful to communities without being paternalistic, judgmental, or defensive in working with people in need. It often involves racial and cultural divides that must be bridged for communities to become unified. While not all these efforts have had obvious successes, they have all made positive contributions to individuals from our church and from the communities with whom the relationship was established.

These efforts go back to 1968, when a summer ministry program, headed by Ken Wright, worked with the residents of Damar Court, a low-income housing development, to provide community support to open an unused swimming pool and to add such amenities as street lights and public telephones. Later, church members worked with three other public housing communities, Hoover Road, Cornwallis Road, and Few Gardens/Edgemont. The latter effort was led by Barbara Rumer, Jan Williams, Susan and Clark Godfrey. All these efforts included tutoring, enhancement of recreation opportunities, and sometimes advocacy for needed services like laundromats, public telephones, and bus service. The most recent of these efforts, the Walltown project, began in 1996 and is still ongoing.

The Walltown project (Walltown is a neighborhood near the church) grew out of a desire, expressed in a congregational meeting in 1995, for a church-wide mission project that would provide opportunities for all components of the church family to get involved. In May of 1996 the church

adopted this project and agreed to provide funding of \$45,000 for its support. That funding was part of a larger effort to obtain funds for the renovation of the church's offices and educational facilities and constituted a 10% "tithe" of the funds raised. Efforts to date have included tutoring, remaking of programs for children, community social gatherings and worship services, and renovations of some residences in the neighborhood. Leaders of this program have included Gordon Whitaker, Worth Lutz, Stuart Wells, and Robin Rogers.

The Walltown project reflects one of the continuing themes of the mission efforts of the church: to reduce racial tension and to promote more understanding among those of different races, cultures, and backgrounds. Walltown's churches draw primarily, if not exclusively, from the local African-American and Hispanic communities. In this project Watts Street has established relationships with two churches in the neighborhood. This continues the tradition of inter-cultural church ties begun with White Rock Baptist Church in the late 1960s and continued by the Friendship Mission Group, established in response to a mission call by Debbie McGill (with later leadership by Lee and Robin Rogers) which began a sister church relationship between Watts Street and First Calvary Baptist Church in the late 1980s.

Beyond the Durham community. Sometimes at Watts Street international and national missions are passive efforts involving only the provision of financial support to denominational mission efforts. Although this financial support may not have been as high as many would prefer, the money is used with care to maximize its benefits. However, at other times the national and international missions efforts are much more active. They involve local efforts to help refugees, and sometimes Watts Street members travel to work in communities outside of Durham.

The Spiritual Life Committee's report in 1959 recommended church members increase their financial support to the church so that the missions program could be enlarged. In 1957 WSBC supported a missionary to Formosa, and in 1959 the church sponsored a missionary family in Chile. In 1963 it paid the expenses of a group of Durham residents on a medical mission to Nicaragua.

Work among the migrants was supported from 1978 through 1988 when the church either paid the salary of a ministerial intern serving the migrant community in southeastern North Carolina or supplemented the efforts of local ministers serving migrants there. That effort is now funded by the Yates Baptist Association. In 1986 JoNell McClernon and Anne Drennan, both registered nurses, spent a month in Granville County working to provide health education to migrants in the area.

As crises developed around the world, the church has attempted to respond. In addition to the traditional offerings of money to help in times of natural disaster, the church has on several occasions helped families in crisis as a result of political upheavals. In the early 1960s the church, led by Lillian and P.B. Cole, sponsored a refugee family from Cuba. In the 1970s a group of families in the church sponsored a refugee family from Cambodia, and the church provided funds to get the family established in Durham. Again in 1983 the church supported a Polish couple caught in the crisis created by Solidarity. In 1996 a Zairian family found itself stranded in Durham. Once again the church responded with financial support as the family sought to establish immigration status with the government.

In recent years the effort to "do missions" has expanded to venues outside of Durham and this country. The focus on this component of the mission program led to the establishment in 1994 of an International Missions commit-

tee separate from the Board of Mission. That committee had a budget for use in promoting understanding of the need to expand the scope of the church's Christian service to places in which people with different languages and cultures face the same basic life issues as Watts Street members. That budget, while small, has been used with great effectiveness to achieve beneficial results in assisting other communities in other cultures and in expanding the definition of mission for many in the congregation.

The new committee has had several kinds of activities. Some of the most significant are the establishment of a sister church relationship with a Baptist church in Kostroma, Russia (Kostroma is a sister city of the city of Durham). To the South, Watts Street has established a Durham partnership with the Nicaraguan community of San Ramon and has sponsored several mission trips to Venezuela.

Several church members have visited Kostroma, with the first visit in 1988. After that first visit political upheaval in Russia led to difficult financial times for many Russians, and throughout the late 1980s and '90s WSBC provided them with small but critical amounts of financial and material support. In 1997 Watts Street paid much of the cost for a delegation from the Kostroma Baptist Church to visit Durham. The covenant with this sister church in Russia was primarily the result of work of four women: Nannie Mae Herndon, Rubyleigh Herndon, Christine Stocks, and Liz Lutz. The discussion of common issues with Baptist churchpeople from Russia proved to be an enlightening experience.

Cindy Adcock joined a delegation from Durham which visited San Ramon, Nicaragua, in 1993. That visit led to the establishment of Durham-San Ramon Sister Community Partnership. Over the next few years the committee's financial support contributed to the building of a school, a "soup

kitchen" for children outside San Ramon, and a library for the township. In 1996 the committee hosted a delegation from San Ramon as it visited Durham.

In 1992, 38 persons responded to Liz Lutz' "call to mission" to establish a Venezuelan mission group. Working with a Southern Baptist missionary, three different groups from Watts Street have made mission trips to Venezuela. Twice they built churches and once they built a roof on a Sunday School facility and began an extension to a local pastor's house. Funds to support the building of these structures came from WSBC, and relationships have developed with many church members. Worth and Liz Lutz, Ed Bratcher, and Steve Booth have been leaders in these missions.

In addition to the actions described here, the church and individual members have concerned themselves with advocacy and education on issues of public concern, such as hunger and capital punishment. One of the most prominent stands taken by the church was in 1983, when the congregation voted unanimously to advocate a nuclear freeze and sponsored a resolution to the Baptist State Convention. For eight weeks in 1986 WSBC sponsored a seminar on United States-Soviet relations. In 1992 the Peace and Reconciliation Committee held a workshop on "Violence in the Community" and followed that with a series of programs for the summer forum. The specifics change, but the concerns and efforts are constant.

In summary, the mission efforts of Watts Street can be characterized by these statements:

- They address basic human needs, in essence preaching sermons through actions instead of words.
- They result from the intersection of three kinds of worshippers at WSBC: those who have vision, those

who can make a vision come to fruit, and a silent majority who tolerate and support with their finances these risky ventures.

- They address fundamental themes of assisting the poor, the disadvantaged, and the racial issues that are such an important part of community life in Durham.
- The church serves as an incubator for new ideas, hatching them, nurturing them, and when they outgrow our walls, gratefully releasing them to others in the community.

There is much more that could be said about the history of missions at Watts Street. A summary like this will inevitably omit important contributions of many of the thousands of people who have called this church home for the past 75 years. The polar star of the mission life of the church throughout the years has been its members' active attempt to apply the teaching of the gospel in the world in which the church finds itself. It is a rich heritage, and the church expectantly awaits the next addition.

Educating for Christian Growth

Educational Directors

1938-46	Ethel Herring, Pastor's Wife
1941-42	Fred Lipe
1943-44	Calvin Knight
1946	Capt. Norris Trapnell
1950-52	Mary Isla Crumpler
1953-54	Wilma Lovins
1955-58	Jean Dula (Fletcher)
1958-62	John Long
1963-67	John Davis
1966-67	Carol Fox
1967-73	Jim Grant
1973-76	Hugh Dukes
1977-78	Wallace Kuroiwa
1978-79	Judy Berry, Beth Crisp
1979-	Dick Chorley

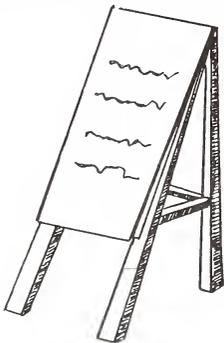
Student Interns

1965-6	Charles Smith
1966-7	Paul Clark
1967-8	Jack Clifford
1971-2	Robert McKeown

Student Interns, cont.

1972-3	Hugh Dukes
1979-80	Cathy Bythewood
1979-80	Gebhart Lohr
	German Exchange
1980	Beth Graham
1981-2	David Strickland
1982-3	Joseph Flair
1983-4	Andrea O'Connell
1984-5	Reinhard Hutter
	German Exchange
1985-6	Gayle Stikeleather
1987	Karen Isaman
1989	Renee Collins
1989-90	Courtney Krueger
1990	Oliver Dekara
	German Exchange
1991-3	Stan Wilson
1993-4	Beth Toler
1995	Mark-Anthony Middleton
1996-8	Lee Canipe

Education without a Director. Until 1941 Watts Street Baptist Church conducted Christian education without any paid staff. A volunteer Superintendent of Sunday School, a



leader of Training Union, and the President of W.M.S. worked with a Workers' Council of teachers and administrators to run a full program of Sunday School classes, Baptist Young People's Union on Sunday nights, and missions study for all age groups.

During the first eighteen months, while the church was being built, Sunday School was held in the George Watts School across the street. (WSBC reciprocated in the late 1920's by allowing Watts school to hold first grade classes in the basement of the church.) Two adult classes were begun, one for men and one for women. For the first eighteen months the two adult classes met in the fifth and sixth grade rooms at George Watts School, where they squeezed into the largest student chairs they could find.

The Women's Bible Class (it never changed its name) was taught by Dr. Carl P. Norris for the first nine years and later by Herbert C. Bradshaw. A few of the women in that first class were still members when the class dissolved, in the 1980s. The Men's Bible Class was soon to become the Cheek Bible Class, named after their teacher, J. M. Cheek, Sr. The Norris class, begun nine years later, had to move to a larger classroom in 1933 and later to the social room in the church basement, where over fifty men met every Sunday for years. The class is smaller now, but it is still meeting. Dr. Norris resigned as teacher of the Women's Bible Class to teach the class named for him. Sunday School Superintendent E. Clyde Johnson realized after a few years that a group of young women should graduate into the adult department. When the new women's class was formed, it was named the Johnson Bible Class, after the man who had started it. These first adult classes remained an important part of the life of Watts Street Baptist Church for more than half a century.

The evening program, the Baptist Young Peoples Union (BYPU), began with junior and senior unions, but grew to include every young person over the age of three. Parents, instead of returning home and then having to come right back for their children, brought a covered dish and ate supper together at the church, creating a Couples Club, a group that invited speakers and shared fellowship.

Mission education for all ages was also industriously carried out by the W.M.S. (see Chapter 6, From Evangelists to Good Neighbors). In 1930 a five-day School of Missions had five classes and was attended by 300 persons.

When Sylvester Green began his pastorate in 1926, the pace picked up; Green had been a high school English teacher, so education was his area of expertise. His two-week Vacation Bible School attracted 234 children in 1928. He conducted an intensive advertising campaign to “enlist Duke students in the work of the church,” putting up small posters in many conspicuous places around the two campuses and placing small blotters with a message from the church in all dormitory rooms. This focus was echoed by the pastor’s wife, Ethel Herring, later in the 1930s and came to its full fruition with the ministry of Warren Carr.

By 1940 the Sunday School had grown to the point that new classrooms were badly needed. The temporary solution was to provide partitions to separate rooms into classrooms in the basement and to purchase curtains to screen off a classroom in the balcony of the sanctuary.

Staff Developments. It became clear that staff was needed to support the educational program. After the worst of the depression (1929-32) was over, another person was hired in 1936, a Pastor’s Assistant. It wasn’t until 1941 that Ruby McCroskey began to focus on Christian education, being hired as a Young Peoples’ Worker, though part of her duties were as church secretary. Ruby had worked for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tennessee. She devotedly filled out their reports about Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. With her help another woman’s class was formed in 1942, the Tillman Bible Class, inspired by Myrtle Fuller Tillman, the teacher for whom the class was named. Shortly after their organization, the Tillman class members invited their husbands to join. Since it was war time, and many of the men left for service, the class

returned to their initial idea of being a woman's class. Some of their early projects were building up the church library and establishing a nursery for children during worship.

In 1948 a Board of Education was created for the first time, with four sub-committees to direct the four distinct educational programs: Sunday School, Sunday Night Training School, Missions, and Music. One of the first actions of this board was to issue a report attacking the amount spent on music and the provincialism of the music committee, as being unaware of total church needs. The organist, the Minister of Music, and the Minister's Assistant all resigned within one month. With all but one of his staff positions vacant, Warren Carr saw an opportunity to make some major changes in the church's educational program. He had already, for two years, been asking the Deacons to consider hiring an architect and planning a building campaign for an education wing, but it would be a long wait until 1953 when the badly needed classrooms were finally ready.

Carr suggested to the new board that the church budget was over-weighted toward music: of the four staff members, the two providing music, the organist and choir director, earned salaries totaling almost as much as the other two departments, the church secretary and the Minister's Assistant (for education). As a result, in 1949 the Minister's Assistant became a Director of Education.

Shortly after that other major changes were made:

- coeducational classes replaced segregated classes for boys and girls;
- children were classified by their class in school, not their ages;
- Sunday School added a young adult department;
- with the improvement of religious education in the church, the number of qualified teachers decreased, necessitating consolidation of some classes so that a

smaller number of teachers was required.

Carr became the resource person for enrichment of Sunday School materials. His idea was to engage parents in the religious education of their children. He led a monthly Teachers and Parents meeting, for which he wrote materials to supplement the Southern Baptist materials the church was using. The program for Training Union on Sunday evening, in contrast, was based on Southern Baptist materials and drew a big crowd, with classes for half a dozen age groups, including a group of young adults. After Training Union, students usually went to the evening worship service.

With the arrival of Jean Dula (Fletcher) in 1955 came the idea of teenage weekend retreats, held in May at Camp Kanata, and providing a wonderful time for learning and bonding. All Directors of Christian Education since that time have continued taking youth on retreats; in the 1960s retreats were offered to adults. In the early 1990s Diane Eubanks Hill, in a newly created position of Minister with Children, extended to elementary age children the opportunity to go on retreats. John Davis explained why retreats are perhaps the most effective means of Christian education:

Since young people learn both good and evil best by example, we have realized the importance of their relationships with Christian leaders. We have made use of retreats and other activities which provide opportunities to live together under Christian guidance.

With Davis began the practice of initiating groups of young people into work on missions projects through work camp experiences. The appeal of these summer projects was enhanced by the chance to travel to different parts of the country. Watts Street youth have attended work camps at the Cherokee Indian reservation in North Carolina and at a second Indian reservation in Oklahoma, as well as at Bacone

College, Oklahoma, at the American Baptist Assembly in Green Lake, Wisconsin, at the North Carolina Baptist Assembly at Southport, N.C., and at Sea Islands, South Carolina.

To help pay for their summer travels, the youth have been creative in finding ways to make money. They now hold an annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. In addition, they have invited the church members to dinner-theater events and to dessert and talent shows. They also have designated certain Saturdays as "hire-a-youth" days. At Christmas they have sold poinsettias.

Dissatisfaction with Southern Baptist educational materials grew through the years, resulting in the appointment of several curriculum study committees. After careful sifting through available church school curricula in 1964, the first committee decided to recommend using United Church of Christ materials. A subsequent committee in 1972 recommended American Baptist curricula.

Not only were standards for curricula rising, but also those for the person who would direct Christian education at WSBC. In 1967 the search committee charged with finding a new director of the educational program required the applicant to have a Bachelor of Divinity or a Master of Theology degree and an educational philosophy consistent with the United Church of Christ curriculum then in use. For the first time, this person was titled a Minister of Education.

The applicant who won the position was Jim Grant, the first staff person in education that stayed at Watts Street for more than three years. His six-year stint at WSBC was not without controversy. Jim was a leader in educational work in the American Baptist Convention, and as a result he involved the church in American Baptist training. Jim took young people and adults to Green Lake, Wisconsin, for summer conferences, and he brought educational leaders from

Valley Forge to WSBC to train teachers of various age levels. In addition, he was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War, a position that was not universally held in the church.

The Grant years saw many innovations in Christian education at Watts Street. Discipleship classes were instituted for fifth and sixth graders to prepare for church membership. In May the church observed Youth Sunday, when the youth led the worship service. An appreciation dinner thanked Church school teachers at the end of the year. A family breakfast was inaugurated after the Thanksgiving service. Church members wrote devotional materials for Advent Books for family use at home during the Christmas season. During the Family Fellowship Nights in Advent families made Christmas decorations and went caroling. The church sponsored an athletic program, both basketball and softball, with Horton Poe as Director of Athletics.

After Jim Grant left, Bob McClernon summarized the ambivalence surrounding his tenure:

We were frequently at odds over the program and materials of our ministry of Christian education. Do you recall the flack filling the sky when some of us discovered the photo of Michaelangelo's statue of young David in the buff, displayed in all his innocent glory on a page in a United Church of Christ study book? And the controversy surrounding creative, theologically alert, courageous and brash Jim Grant? Loss of Jim was, I believe without question, the greatest suffered by our church during these years, for under his vigorous (if less than diplomatic) leadership we were on the way toward a superb ministry of education.

With the coming of Dick Chorley in 1979, Watts Street won another long period of uninterrupted excellent Christian education. New programs again appeared. The All Ages Beach Retreat became an annual tradition. Adult retreats

and training opportunities were held in conjunction with two sister American Baptist churches, Pullen Memorial in Raleigh and Olin T. Binkley in Chapel Hill. Leadership teams from the American Baptist Churches, USA, led daylong workshops to review innovative educational materials and strategies. Work days gathered together church members to build Habitat for Humanity houses or to clean up the church property. The January term provided a break from routine Sunday School classes by inviting a Biblical expert to teach a selected portion of the scriptures to all of the adult classes. Later, the January term moved to February and added other electives, e.g., marriage enrichment, business ethics, and local authors relating their work to their faith. The Summer Forum was a second chance to get better acquainted with other Watts Street members by attending summer sessions for all adults centered on topics of social and political interest. In the 1990s Wednesday night church suppers were inaugurated, first once a month, and then once a week, as a time for fellowship, children's choir rehearsals, mission study, and other adult education opportunities.

Education at WSBC provides a challenge. There is no formula that fits Christian education at Watts Street. Bob McClernon best described the challenges that face not only a Minister of Education, but also the laypersons who work with him:

We are a congregation whose programming has mostly been "tailor made" for use on the corner of Watts Street and Urban Avenue. We have not focused our operations on program packages provided by our two denominations. I do not believe that the majority of us fully appreciate the demands this makes on lay and professional leadership. It requires highly motivated, innovative, creative leaders, and the expenditure of much time, energy, thought, and money.

Watts Street is fortunate to have those leaders.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Singing to the Glory of God

Music Directors, Organists

1925-34	Norman Matthews
1934-45	Mrs. S. J. Angier
1947	Mrs. Lloyd Saville
1948-49	Delbert Bowles Minister of Music Gene Mooney Organist
1949-53	Betty Engleman
1953-55	Betty Hill (McIntyre)
1955-56	Lois Ruth
1956-59	Judith Eckerman
1959-61	Julie Bonnet (Creighton)
1961-63	Stephen Sigler
1964-68	Richard Joiner
1969	William Treichler
1969-70	Richard Joiner
1970-97	Kenneth Harrell
1998	Larry Speakman Director of Music Ministries Tom Bloom Organist



“Music is a valued element in the life of our church. Through a skilled and sensitive music ministry, we are led in singing and hearing the praises of God. The Chancel Choir, open to all persons tenth grade and above, offers annually a special program of worship drawn from the great treasury of music of the Christian Church.”

This statement, written by a church member in 1992, quite adequately summarizes the state of music within WSBC. From the beginning music has been important to Watts Street members. A newspaper article in 1929 identi-

fied the choir as “one of the best in the city” and commented on the special programs that attracted city-wide attention.

In the early days of the church, even during the depression, the church found money to pay lead singers in the choir and a song leader for revivals though it did not reimburse the revival preacher. In 1939 the Deacons discussed how music “could be arranged” so the pastor would have more time for his sermon! In fact, music was so important in the early history of WSBC that it caused a controversy that led to the resignation of three of the four staff members. In 1949 the newly created Board of Christian Education objected to the amount of money poured into music, when there was no budget allotment for a Director of Education. As a result, the choir director, the organist, and the minister’s assistant resigned. The decision was made to seek a combined organist-choir director to save money (\$1260), which could then be spent on education. For almost fifty years Watts Street’s music was directed by one person, serving as organist and choir director, until 1998, when the search committee for a replacement for Ken Harrell decided the best way to fill the position was to again hire two persons: Larry Speakman as Director of Music Ministries, and Tom Bloom, organist.

Provision of a fine organ has always been a top priority at Watts Street. The first organ was the 1929 gift of W. C. Lyon, Sr., in honor of his wife, Mary Hinton Lyon. Both were present in the congregation on the day of the dedication of the 2-manual Estey instrument with its echo organ. After years of service for the Estey, by 1965 the need for a new organ was urgent. Upon the advice of Music Director Richard Joiner, the church hired organ consultant Robert S. Baker, Dean of the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, to help with decisions about choice of a competent builder, the best design and size for the organ, and the changes to the choir loft that would be

needed. Dr. Baker came to Durham several times for the installation, so that he could see to the "fine tuning, voicing, and finishing to achieve the highest artistic results," as he explained in a letter to the Deacons. With the help of a \$60,000 gift from an anonymous donor, in 1969 a fine 3-manual Austin organ with 47 ranks was installed, the best, it was said, in Durham other than the one in Duke Chapel.

Beginning in 1956, Watts Street has hired Ministers of Music who have chosen to perform the finest in church music. Judith Eckerman, a graduate of Eastman School of Music, was an outstanding organist, who, after she left, returned briefly to North Carolina from New York City, touring as solo organist. Richard Joiner, who served five years at WSBC before leaving to train as a computer programmer, presented fine special music, such as Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Vivaldi's *Gloria*, sung in Latin. He also found money to hire instrumentalists and soloists to augment the choir. During this period Joiner kept five choirs going. When problems developed with his successor after only nine months, Joiner returned for another year at Watts Street, handling both the music and his computer course work.

In 1970 Ken Harrell arrived, to stay as Minister of Music for 27 years. Harrell's strength was not only musical, but also spiritual: he brought to his task a commitment to celebrate God through music and, like Steve Sigler, also to minister personally to church members in need. Sigler had organized choir members to go to nursing homes for sing-alongs and Christmas caroling. Harrell took similar groups to perform a prison ministry. In addition, he visited shut-ins and members in the hospital. In 1975 Harrell requested and got from the Board of Deacons money to purchase a tape recording system for taping services for the ministry to shut-ins. Harrell's spiritual sensitivity worked to integrate the musical selections very closely into the over-all theme of the worship service, Sunday after Sunday.

Glorious special music was performed twice a year, during the Christmas and Easter seasons, using paid instrumentalists and soloists. Timpani and trumpets accompanied the hymns at Easter. Using the English handbells, given anonymously in 1962, handbell choirs, both adult and youth, performed special arrangements.

One innovation sponsored by the Music Committee was not so happily accepted. In 1981 a visiting dance group performed a liturgical dance during an 11 o'clock service, to the consternation of many. The problem centered on one of the dancers, a large heavy-set man, whose black leotard top failed to cover his very prominent naval. Some church members were so upset, they threatened to withdraw their financial support. Slowly in later years appropriate liturgical dance was re-introduced and has become an integral and now traditional part of special services.

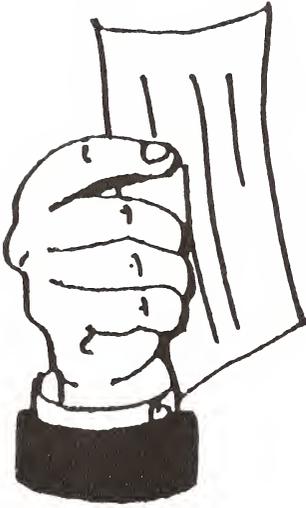
To encourage not only high quality of music, but also bonding among choir members, Harrell organized weekend choir retreats. The nuns at Avila Conference Center were startled to hear the Gloria, sung in Latin, by a Baptist choir!

Harrell began a children's music program, Fun with Music, in which, by 1972, 50 children or 50 percent of the church school enrollment, were engaged. Fun with Music was not a choir, but a program based on the idea that music should be an enjoyable part of everyday life. Harrell also organized Saturday workshops to support music in the church school and assist teachers of young children.

When, after 27 years, Harrell retired in 1997, the church paid tribute to his long and loving service. Each family in the church was invited to purchase one copy of the *Chalice Hymnal*, requested by Harrell as a replacement for the *Pilgrim Hymnal*, purchased in 1973 in honor of Ernest S. Booth, Sr. This enabled every member in Watts Street Baptist Church to honor the dedicated man who had produced such beautiful music for so many years.

CHAPTER NINE

Gracious Giving



From the days when five men saved the church from bankruptcy by mortgaging their own homes and businesses, Watts Street members have been wondrously generous with their worldly goods, as well as with their time and talents.

Stained Glass Windows. The stained glass windows in the sanctuary were not originally designated as memorials. In 1935 the Deacons decided that C.T. Council

should have the honor of memorializing his family through the large Tiffany window at the front, in appreciation for his large donation paying off the church mortgage. A few side windows had been specifically designated before that time: to Mrs. J. L. Wilkerson, who died in 1924, and to Rev. T. M. Green, Sylvester Green's father, who was instrumental in founding WSBC and who died in 1925. In 1943 the Deacons decided that the other stained glass windows on each side of the sanctuary would be designated as memorials to families who wished to donate \$125 to the church. Accordingly, the following memorials were made:

Windows on the South Side of the Sanctuary

#1 Rev. T. M. Green (1868-1925), given by the Young Woman's Auxiliary



Tiffany Stained Glass Window

#2-Mrs. J. L. Wilkerson, 1866-1924 and B. Louis Wilkerson, 1899-1923

#3-Reverend J. T. Riddick, 1871-1938, Pastor, 1932-1938

#4-John T. Salmon, 1874-1938

#5-Watson H. Crutchfield, 1871-1935

Windows on the North Side of the Sanctuary

#1-A. J. Draughon, 1861-1938

#2-Mrs. Mary Markham Beavers, 1875-1951

#3-First Lieutenant Demming Morton Ward, Killed in Action, China, 1945

#4-John Horne, 1878-1948

#5-Eric Clyde Johnson, 1889-1931 and Annie B. Johnson, 1889-1988

Memorial Funds. Church members often left money to the church or their families requested gifts to the church in place of flowers. In the 1970s these memorial contributions were designated to go into a memorial fund. The earliest contributions for such a fund came upon the deaths of Ned May and Delos W. Sorrell. Eventually, these gifts formed the basis of a Property Preservation Fund.

In 1974 the first formal gift for a special memorial fund was made to the church in memory of charter members, Dr. Carl P. Norris and his wife, Louise Wyatt Norris, by their three daughters, all church members: Mary Cooper, Louise Rand, and Marion Grabarek. Over the years money from this fund has been used to supplement and enrich youth ministries.

In due time, others were added to these two funds. By 1998 these additional funds were in place:

- The Mission Endowment Fund, established in 1982 by the Board of Mission, with the use of funds

to be designated by that Board. Before she died, Margaret Lutz made a large donation to this fund to get it to a significant size.

- The Education Fund, established for general educational purposes.
- The Music Endowment Fund, established with memorial gifts honoring Dr. Derwin Cooper, who served for years as chair of the Music Committee, and Ned May, long-time Deacon. Income from this fund is to support the music ministry beyond the funds provided in the church budget.
- The Price Laube Youth Mission Fund for summer youth trips, begun by Catherine Price in appreciation for the church experience of her son, Eric.
- The Memorial Garden Fund, dedicated to ensure maintenance for the Maude Wall Cheek Memorial Garden.
- The H.H. Cheek, Jr., Family Endowment Fund, established to maintain the Chronobell system given by the family earlier.
- The General Endowment Fund, begun with a \$25,000 gift in 1997.

In 1998 the total value of these funds was over \$265,000.

The Ladies' Bazaar. When the church decided to begin holding Moravian Lovefeasts, W.M.S. Circle 3 met at the home of Jenny Lee to sew the crisp white aprons and hats worn by the servers. This sewing activity expanded, until in 1976 the Monday Morning Sewing Circle regularly met at the church for sewing and lunch. The ladies, often called to help serve at wedding receptions and church gatherings held in the social room, realized the need for the decoration and renovation of that room. An annual bazaar could raise money to help with this problem. The first Bazaar was

organized, with the stipulation that 10% of the earnings would go to missions. For the first two years, the project was the social room. Other projects were the offices of the senior minister, the minister of education, and the minister of music; the nursery; parquet flooring in the sanctuary (took two years of Bazaar receipts); mini blinds; a sound system including receivers for hearing impaired; kitchen equipment (took two years); the side vestibule; the downstairs bathroom; hall carpet for the second floor; the ladies' parlor; and rooms 102 and 104.

Missions contributions, always 10 percent of the total proceeds, have gone to those missions projects sponsored by the Board of Mission, such as Habitat, Edgemont, and Threshold; to the church's emergency fund; to clothes and Christmas gifts for needy families; to furnishings for the Missions House; to church families with special needs; and to other local missions.

Other Gifts. Some gifts escape the categories above. In honor of her husband, Marion Ham, who drew the plans for the educational wing in the late 1960s, Louise Ham provided memorial funds to furnish, carpet, and panel the church library. Upon the early death of Faye Hare, her family, Edwina, Wallace, Vickie, Becky, and her twin, Kaye, provided funds for an access ramp at the rear of the church in 1985. Gladys Jackson, upon her death, bequeathed a sum to be used to purchase large-size playground equipment in 1991. In 1994 the whole playground was renovated, with a new fence, grading, ground cover, and additional equipment, in honor of Emily Joiner, who has taught preschool children for a number of years. In her will, Ann Brown left a very sizeable gift to the church, which was used to purchase the elevator that was installed with the 1998 addition.

Others, too numerous to mention, have given generously of their money, their time, and their talents to their church.

APPENDIX A

Church Covenants

1923. Howard Weeks, pastor

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations, as the Lord has prospered us.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant, and the principles of God's word.

1957. Warren Carr, pastor

Since God has called us into covenant with Him and has gathered us for His purpose, we, upon a profession of faith, having committed ourselves to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, do now covenant with one another as one Body in Christ:

To God the Father and the Son, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we pledge our full obedience and commit ourselves to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and to honor no persuasion or command contrary to His will.

We covenant to live in this church as disciples, seeking ever to grow in the knowledge of God, and as witnesses to God's redemptive act and sustaining grace. We covenant to attend and support the worship of this church, its ordinances, discipline, and doctrines, to contribute to its support in its total mission by giving of our time, our abilities, and our money.

We covenant to live as Christians in our homes, to engage in family and individual devotions, to teach our children by instruction and example that Christ is Savior and Lord and that in commitment to Him they will find life's highest purpose.

We engage to hold one another in Christian love, to be slow to judge and quick to forgive. We shall not consciously engage in conduct which may cause another to stumble. In compassion, affection, and concern, we shall minister to each other in sickness, distress, and bereavement, pray for each other, be mindful and considerate of one another, and share one another's joys and sorrows.

We further covenant to live as Christians in the world, to be exemplary in our conduct and just in our dealings. We covenant to include all people everywhere within the circle of our love and concern and to regard as of the household of faith all who worship Christ as Savior and Lord. As we hold to our Baptist heritage, we shall seek with all Christians a unity of spirit and action.

We further resolve that we shall become active members of another church when circumstances require our separation from this one.

In this covenant made we shall stand firm, holding its principles in sincerity, judging ourselves false to our professed faith if we ignore its demands upon our lives and resources, and renewing it regularly with each other before God in our common worship.

1997. Mel Williams, pastor

Having been called by God and led by the Holy Spirit to confess Jesus Christ as Lord, and having been baptized into the church gathered in this place and throughout the world, we enter into covenant with God and with one another. We promise:

to worship together, witnessing to God's redemptive and sustaining grace;

to seek to grow in the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus and in our own personal experience;

to study the bible and to pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit in applying its teachings to our lives;

to instruct others in the Christian faith and in our Baptist heritage;

to teach the children among us by word and example that in obedience to God they will find life's highest purpose and richest meanings;

to love one another, being slow to judge and quick to forgive;

to celebrate different views and gifts among us, confident that we are one body in Christ;

to minister to one another with compassion, sharing both joys and sorrows;

to contribute time, money, and abilities to the church's ministry;

to proclaim the gospel to those who do not know Jesus as savior;

to embody God's forgiveness in all our relationships, both at home and at work;

to promote peace and justice wherever we touch other lives;

to support the mission of the church by feeding, housing, and befriending the needy;

to seek the kingdom of God on earth, knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love.

We enter this covenant freely, promising to abide by its claims on our lives and to renew it regularly with one another before God.

APPENDIX B
Charter Members*

J. M. Airheart	Mrs. Fred Colclough	Hendricks Muse
Mrs. J. M. Airheart	M.O. Cole	J. W. Muse
Miss Georgia Airheart	Mrs. M.O. Cole	Marvin H. Muse
Milton Airheart	Miss Coma Cole	Mrs. J. W. Neal
B.D. Ashlin	Philip Cole	C. P. Norris
Mrs. B. D. Ashlin	W. J. H. Cotton	Mrs. C. P. Norris
Miss Maude Baity	Mrs. W. J. H. Cotton	Miss Mary Norris
H. C. Barbee	R. L. Deas	Mrs. T. L. Pace
Mrs. H. C. Barbee	Mrs. R. L. Deas	Mrs. Dora Page
Mrs. O. D. Barber	I. S. Eubanks	Miss Mamie Page
Mrs. L. H. Barbour	B. W. Fassett	Mrs. W. G. Parrish
Mrs. Mary Beavers	Mrs. B. W. Fassett	E. C. Piper
Wesley F. Beavers	B. T. Hicks	Mrs. E. C. Piper
S. B. Black	Mrs. B. T. Hicks	Mrs. Julia Poole
Mrs. S. B. Black	Otis High	H. M. Reams
J. T. Blackman	Miss Leona Hinton	Mrs. H. M. Reams
Mrs. J. T. Blackman	J. L. Horne	Miss Betty F. Reams
E. H. Bowling	E. Clyde Johnson	Miss Helen Reams
Mrs. E. H. Bowling	Mrs. E. Clyde Johnson	Mrs. B. T. Roberts, Sr.
Edwin Bowling	L. W. Jones	Miss Ruth Rogers
J. E. Bowling	Mrs. L. W. Jones	J. T. Salmon
Mrs. J. E. Bowling	R. M. Kinton	Mrs. J. T. Salmon
J. M. Bowling	Mrs. R. M. Kinton	Miss Evelyn Salmon
J. W. Bright	Mrs. J. L. Kirkland	Thomas Salmon
Courtney Bright	Jack Kirkland	W. A. Salmon
Miss Dorothy Bright	C. B. Laws	I. W. Satterwhite
Miss Ruth Bright	Mrs. C. B. Laws	Mrs. I. W. Satterwhite
W. L. Brown	Mrs. Bessie Lowe	Miss Gladys Satterwhite
Mrs. W. L. Brown	W. Aubyn Lyon	Miss Margaret Satterwhite
Miss Lucille Bullard	Mrs. W. Aubyn Lyon	Mrs. Charles Scarlette
S. A. Carter	W. C. Lyon	E. G. Shaw
Mrs. S. A. Carter	Mrs. W. C. Lyon	Mrs. E. G. Shaw
W. C. Carter	Frederick Lyon	R. J. Shaw
Mrs. W. C. Carter	Miss Margaret Lyon	Mrs. R. J. Shaw
Miss Eunice Chaplin	Wortham Lyon	C. H. Shipp
Miss Bennie Cheek	Mrs. R. W. Malone	Miss Elsie Shipp
J. M. Cheek	D. C. May	Miss Helen Shipp
Mrs. J. M. Cheek	Mrs. D. C. May	Miss Mary Shipp
F. R. Clark	Miss Elise May	Mrs. S. N. Slade
Mrs. F. R. Clark	Miss Julia May	Norman Slade
Miss Esther Crutchfield	D. S. Miller, Jr.	Miss Felicia Slade
W. H. Crutchfield	Miss Evelyn Miller	Mrs. Viola Suit
Mrs. W. H. Crutchfield	Luther C. Morris	John Sweaney
Miss Florence Crutchfield	Mrs. Luther C. Morris	Mrs. John Sweaney
Fred Colclough	Mrs. C. J. Muse	Miss Lois Sweaney

Mrs. O. V. Thompson	Mrs. Wallace Tuck	Mrs. O. F. Williams
W. C. Timberlake	Mrs. Walter Warren	W. H. Young
Mrs. W. C. Timberlake	C. W. Weathington	Mrs. W. H. Young
E. C. Tilley	Mrs. C. W. Weathington	Claiborne Young
E. G. Tilley	Mrs. J. W. Wilkerson, Sr.	Miss Foye Young
Mrs. E. G. Tilley	Louis Wilkerson	Miss Margaret Young
Miss Pauline Tilley	O. F. Williams	Victor Young
		William Young

* Added in 1998: Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Draughon

APPENDIX C

Ordinands of Watts Street Baptist Church

C. Sylvester Green	1926
T. Rupert Coleman	1928
James Cansler	1950
Max Wicker	1952
John Stone	1960
Addie Davis	1964
*Charles Smith	1968
*Paul Clark, Jr.	1968
Allen F. Page	1968
William M. Hall	1970
Roland Johnson	1971
John Rogers	1973
Gilbert Fauber	1973
Bryant Kendrick	1973
Lisa Grabarek Matthews	1974
Phil Motley	1976
*Nancy Stanton	1977
Al Bell	1978
*Andrea O'Connell	1986
Danny Green	1986
Paul Boone	1987
Clay Berry	1987
Carole Jackson Cothran	1989
*Courtney Krueger	1992
LeDayne McCleese Polaski	1993
*Stan Wilson	1994
*Beth Toler	1998

* Divinity School intern at Watts Street

Ordained members growing up in WSBC, ordained elsewhere

Carl Cooper
 Jeff Hobart
 Carol Ann Sorrell Strawbridge





