

Brief History of Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC

1894	1902	1917	1921	1924	1925
1 st Pres. opens Pearl Cotton Mill mission church at the mill.	Pearl Mill mission church reorganized as regular Pres. church and named Second Presbyterian	Second Pres moves from Mill site to double lot on the south side of Trinity Avenue.	Following revival and membership drive, church reorganized as Trinity Ave Presbyterian	In a show of support, fifty + members of First Pres move their membership to Trinity.	1 st service new building. Working with Pearl Mill exchange lots and build on the S.E. corner of Trinity Ave and Gregson Sts

Narrative that follows was written by Robert L. Blake, Ruling Elder, January 1990

My interest in history, and especially the history of our church, has led me to investigate the available records and compose a short account of some of the early interesting events in the development of Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Most of the church records were destroyed in the 1966 fire; as a result the source of information is limited. Much of my material comes from a history Mrs. Henry (Mary Lou) Carr wrote when she was historian for the Women's Auxiliary in 1932. The rest came from the First Presbyterian Church records and the Manuscript room at the Duke University Library.

In 1894, the Rev. L. B. Turnbull, Minister at First Presbyterian Church, was instrumental in opening a mission at the Pearl Cotton Mill on Trinity Avenue. It met in a mill cottage on Washington Street at first. A year later a chapel was build on the mill property. A few years later, when Duke Street was cut through to Trinity Avenue, it turned out to be very close to the southwest corner.

Mr. George Watts and Mr. Leo Heartt maintained a regular Sunday afternoon Sunday School and a Friday night prayer meeting. When it was Mr. Watt's turn to conduct that service, he was there even if it meant a train trip from Baltimore or New York, interrupting business, and with the knowledge that there may be only a handful of people at the chapel.

When Dr. E. R. Leyburn came to the First Church as minister in February 1902, the Mill Chapel acquired a staunch friend. It wasn't long before it was converted into a regular, organized church. The following article was in the daily paper dated December 1902.

“The Second Presbyterian Church of Durham was organized Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock by Rev. W.C.Arrowwoord of Burlington, Rev. E. R. Leyburn, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, and Rev. R. G. Matherson, Assistant Pastor of the city.”

It is interesting to note that in a church bulletin from First Church for January 1905, we find that Rev. R. G. Matheson had become the Pastor at the new church.

There are many names that appear over and over again in the records I read, but none more often than Hallie Pope. A parochial school was maintained the first years, and Miss Pope's name first appeared as being in charge of the school. She worked closely with the ministers in visitation, personal work, and pastor's aide. Articles such as this would appear: "In July 1905 Miss Hallie Pope was sent as a delegate to the Young People's Missionary Conference at Asheville, NC."

Later she married Mr. W.L. Cadwalender. This, however, did not reduce her activity in church work; in fact it brought another hand to the task. Mr. Cadwalender is listed as one of the three elders elected when reorganization took place and Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church was born. The other two were Z.A. Rochelle and Marshall B. Wyatt.

It was Mrs. Cadwalender who organized the ladies into a working group and was elected President for 1916-1917. She made Brunswick Stew with Mrs. Burch and sold it to get money to buy carpet strips for the aisles. She was assistant to the Rev. George L. Cooper, the first minister for Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, aiding in visiting and caring for the sick and needy.

Here is a good place to go back to the record of the Pearl Mill Chapel being built on the grounds of the mill, the southeastern corner of Duke and Trinity Avenue. Many of us understood that the church was on the south side of Trinity, several lots west of Duke Street—what happened?

It was fifteen minutes after twelve noon on June 29, 1914, when the called meeting of the Directors of Pearl Cotton Mill came to order in the office of the Erwin Cotton Mill in West Durham. In the absence of the President, Mr. George Watts, the meeting was presided over by the Vice president, Mr. W.A. Erwin. Mr. J.E. Staff and Mr. J. Hearpin Erwin, the Secretary, were also present.

It was moved that the officials of the Corporation be instructed to deed the Second Presbyterian Church, for a church site, a parcel of land situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of Duke and Trinity Avenue. It included three lots formerly owned by B.L. Duke. The motion was made requesting the Secretary-Treasurer be instructed to donate to the church the sum of \$1,000 towards the expense of moving the building. The meeting adjourned.

During the next year and a half, the time never seemed right or the money available to settle the church building on the lots provided.

On December 23, 1916, another called meeting of the Directors of Pearl Cotton Mill was held in the office of the Vice President. Mr. W. A. Erwin, in West Durham, at 12:30 p.m. President Mr. George Watts presided and Mr. W.A. Erwin, J.F. Wiley and J. Hearpin Erwin were also present. A motion was made and passed that the Treasurer be authorized to donate to the Second Presbyterian Church \$200 in addition to the amount already given towards the expenses of

moving the church build from the Pearl Mill property to a nearby lot on the south side of Trinity Avenue in consideration of their returning or deeding back to the Corporation the lots previously given them in 1914.

Apparently, later in 1917 the church was moved to a double lot on the south side of Trinity Avenue, and about 3 or 4 lots from Duke Street, towards Gregson Street. Four year later it was reorganized as Trinity Presbyterian Church.

On February 4, 1924, at twelve noon, another called meeting of the Board of Directors of Erwin Cotton Mill was held in the office of W.A. Erwin in West Durham. The minutes of meeting contain interesting information concerning our church. The meeting was presided over by W.A. Erwin who became President after Mr. George Watts' death in 1921. I shall quote and edit part of the resolution that passed:

“Resolve, that the proposal made to our Corporation by the Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, dated January 30, 1924, to purchase three lots laying on the south side of Trinity Avenue, front on 150 feet on Trinity Avenue, beginning at the corner of Gregson Street and running easterly, and running back 150 feet with Gregson Street. Paying for the above, will be the lots now occupied by the said church, fronting 100 feet on the south side of Trinity Avenue part way between Gregson and Duke Street. The President and Secretary-Treasurer of our company are hereby authorized to execute a deed for the two lots above described made to and in the name of the Corporation and the sum of \$4,000 be paid as they propose a reasonable difference in the value of the three lots which we now deed to said Presbyterian Church.”

Since the church records show that the cost of the exchange in lots was \$8,000, it is assumed that the value placed on the two lots the church rested on was \$4,000. What led to the proposal to the Pearl Cotton Mill for land to build a new church?

From 1919 through 1920 the financial situation became so weak and workers so scarce that Presbytery finally dissolved the Second Presbyterian Church. Through Mr. Wyatt the church work was carried on by means of Sunday School and prayer meetings. On May 16, 1921, a few remaining loyal members, with the help of three Elders from First Church, organized a special revival service. Rev. O.G. Jones, D.D., a Syndical Evangelist, held overwhelmingly successful services from May 9 through May 17.

On the evening of the 16th, after a sermon by Dr. Jones, the people of the congregation reorganized. Seventy (70) people desired to unite as members by letter, reinstatement, or by profession. Dr. Jones propounded the questions and declared them to be duly organized under

the name Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church. Rev. R.S. Carson served as part-time pastor for the first five months until Mr. George L. Cooper was called, the first full-time minister.

Although several names were added to the rolls his first couple of years, Mr. Cooper put an extra effort into a membership drive late in 1923. The financial situation had reached a dangerous point. He visited the Big Brothers Men's Bible Class at First Church, and as a result of prayer and a passionate pleas, a delegation of 38 members moved their membership to Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church in January 1924.

Mrs. H.C. Carr puts it this way in her account: "In answer to prayer we believe a large group of members in the First Church, realizing the opportunity and being anxious to be used by the Master in the furtherance of His Kingdom, moved their membership to Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church. This delegation was headed by Mr. L.D. Kirland, SR., Mr. E.A. Williamson and Dr. Henry C. Carr. From this time on the church took a decided trend upward and the result cannot be measured by the standard of man. Hearts have over flowed in their zeal for service, and many lives have been made happier for having felt that they were actually needed to render some deed done for Him."

On January 19, 1924, the following were received from First Presbyterian Church:

Mr. J.F. Barfield	Miss Marie Hill	Mr. P.P. Phillips
Mrs. J.F. Barfield	Mr. E.A. Hughes, Jr.	Mrs. P.P. Phillips
Miss Rachel Beall	Mr. E.A. Hughes	Mr. H.F. Primrose
Mr. J.W. Bingham	Mrs. E.A. Hughes	Mrs. H.F. Primrose
Mr. R.W. Black	Miss Mary Susan Hughes	Mr. B.F. Sapp
Mrs. R.W. Black	Mr. S.M. Hughes	Perry A. Sloan, Sr.
Dr. L.S. Booker	Mr. John L. Kirkland	Mr. J.W. Stone
Mrs. J.E. Briscoll	Mr. L.D. Kirland, Sr.	Mrs. J.W. Stone
Dr. H.C. Carr	Mrs. L.D. Kirland, Sr.	Mr. E.A. Williamson
Mrs. L.H. Foster	Mr. O.D. Kirkland	Mrs. E.A. Williamson
Mr. N.M. Hill	Mrs. O.D. Kirkland	
Mrs. N.M. Hill	Mr. W.B. Kirkland	
Miss Madeline Hill	Mrs. F. E. Morton	

On January 27, 1924, sixteen more from First Church joined Trinity Avenue.

Mrs. I.W. Bingham	Miss Anna Horton	Mr. R.N. Strayhorn
Mrs. H.C. Carr	Mr. L.J. Kirkland	Miss Nettie Walker
Mr. L.F. Dixon	Mr. E.T. McCoy	Mr. C.R. Wheeler
Mrs. L.F. Dixon	Mrs. E.T. McCoy	Mrs. C.R. Wheeler
Mr. Arthur L. Foster	Mr. Dallas Pickard	
Mr. John Gibson	Mrs. Dallas Pickard	

On January 30, 1924, Dr. H.C. Carr and Mrs. L.D. Kirkland, Sr. were given the authority to proceed in the exchange of the present church site for a lot on the southeast corner of Trinity Avenue and Gregson Street. On February 7th the exchange from the Pearl Cotton Mill was approved at a meeting held just three days after the Corporation passed their resolution, at which time a Building Committee was elected including H.C. Carr, L.D. Kirland, Sr., Perry A. Sloan, Sr., and I.W. Bingham. (In a very short time, Bingham was replaced by E.A. Williamson.)

Rose and Rose were the architects and N. Underwood was the contractor for the new building for which the cornerstone was laid later in 1924.

At a congregational meeting held December 10, 1924, it was decided to borrow money for the new church, accordingly on December 21st. Trustees were authorized to execute with the West Durham Building and Loan Association a Deed of Trust securing a note for a loan of \$25,000.

The first service was held in the new Sanctuary on Sunday, October 6, 1925, and Dr. Frank Hickman, Minister to the Chapel at Duke was the speaker for the occasion.

Approximate cost of new building in 1925:

Cost of exchange in lots	\$ 8,000
General Contract	48,000
Heating Plant	3,800
Organ	8,000
Sunday School Partition	1,000
Carpet, Chairs, etc.	1,000
Benches	3,000
Windows	2,000
Light Fixtures	1,500
Architect	1,500
Total	77,8000

An education wing was built in the early 1950s, directly to the east of the original sanctuary. On January 15, 1966, this education wing suffered a significant fire. The wing was reconstructed /repaired immediately thereafter. A second education wing was constructed to the east of the first in 2004.