

A HISTORY OF ATLANTIC PRESBYTERY

Atlantic Presbytery as we know it today came into being on Friday, January 16, 1959. However, it is essential to note that although the present-day Atlantic Presbytery has existed for only twenty-eight years, we have traced its historical roots back to January 1, 1868. It has had a great influence on thousands of lives over the years. It is with high esteem that we share some of the significant highlights of Atlantic Presbytery's history.

THE EARLY YEARS, 1868-1887

In 1866, the Board of Mission for Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. began to send White missionaries from the North to the South. They were to evangelize and educate the Freedmen. In 1867, the Reverends Sidney S. Murkland and Willis L. Miller were sent to organize the mission work among the Freedmen of Charleston, South Carolina. They arrived in Charleston and learned of the work of the Reverend Jonathan C. Gibbs, a Black missionary and member of the Presbytery of Baltimore. Reverend Gibbs was asked to assist them in organizing a presbytery. A resolution was prepared stating the case and requesting the General Assembly to concur with their action. The candidates and licentiates were examined. They were licensed or ordained.

On January 1, 1868, the Atlantic Presbytery was officially established under the action of the Synod of Baltimore and included all the ministers serving south of the line of division. The line of division ran Southwest from Weldon, North Carolina through Columbia, South Carolina to Augusta, Georgia to the mouth of the Savannah Rivers. Atlantic Presbytery was attached to the Synod of Baltimore. There were six ministers: the Reverends Jonathan C. Gibbs, Ishmael Moultrie, William T. Smith, Hambleton H. Hunter (the four Blacks), the Reverends William T. Carr and Matthew R. Miller (the two Whites). The three licentiates were Blacks. The eleven churches were served by stated supply ministers. The Reverend William T. Carr was elected as Commissioner from Atlantic Presbytery to the General Assembly.

In 1869, the presbytery had grown to eight ministers, one licentiate and thirteen churches. The new ministers were John C. Sinclair, Ennals J. Adams, Peter P. Hedges, J. Douglas Robertson, and Lewis Nelson. The membership was 2,555.

In 1870, Atlantic Presbytery became a part of the Synod of Atlantic. In 1879, Zion (Charleston), Salem, Hopewell, and Aimwell Churches joined Atlantic Presbytery. They had come from Charleston Presbytery. The presbytery boundaries were redrawn with the creation of Fairfield Presbytery.

In 1882, the presbytery had twenty-eight congregations and they had stated supply ministers. The congregations were located in six counties of South Carolina, namely – Aiken, Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, Sumter, and Orangeburg. There were ten ministers enrolled.

In 1886, the churches were: Aimwell, Beaufort-Salem, Berean, Bethel, Bethlehem Second, Calvary, Congruity, Edisto, Ebenezer, Friendship, Grace, Goodwill, Harmony-Elizabeth, Hebron, Hopewell, Melina, Mount Andrews, Saint James, Saint Michael, Saint Paul, Rivers Chapel, Wallingford, and Zion. All of these churches were served by stated supply ministers; they had a combined membership of 3,486. There were thirteen ministers and among those were: Job Jackson, John C. Simmons, Charles S. West, Ishmael S. Moultrie, and Morris J. Seabrook.

THE LATER YEARS, 1888-1959

On February 4, 1888, the Atlantic Presbytery met at Bethlehem Second in rural Sumter County and voted in favor of the following overture from Fairfield Presbytery: " that the following counties be cut off from the Atlantic Presbytery and attach to the Fairfield Presbytery - counties of Sumter, Marion, Clarendon, Kershaw, Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg, Marlebrough, and Darlington." Pleasant View and Immanuel Presbyterian Churches were transferred from Atlantic Presbytery to McClelland Presbytery. The remaining twenty-two churches were located in the counties of Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, and Orangeburg,

In 1896, the presbytery was comprised of the following churches: Aimwell, Beaufort-Salem, Berean, Bethel, Calvary, Edisto, Faith Grace, Hebron, Hopewell, Mount Pleasant, Rivers Chapel, Salem, Summerville, Saint Andrews, Saint James, Saint Michael, Saint Paul, Olivet, Wallingford, Zion (Charleston), and Zion (Johns Island). The ministers were: Elias Garden, Robert Wesley Holman, Adam Frayer, Geo M. Elliott, Jacob C. Moultrie, Joseph A. Rollins, L.B. Ellison, A.L. Tolbert, R.E. Primius, Coyden Uggams, J.G. Wright, A. S. Gray, O.C. Wallace, W.H. Mitchell, James C. Carlile and J.R. Pearson.

In the early 1900s, new leaders began to emerge and among those were William L. Metz and William Paden. Between 1910 and 1917, the migration of Blacks from the southern states caused an acute decline in church membership. During the 1940's, Atlantic Presbytery saw two of her sons return to serve churches. The Reverends F. Perry Metz and John Henry Washington provided talented and youthful leadership.

On January 16, 1959, a joint meeting of Atlantic, Fairfield, and McClelland Presbyteries was held at the Ebenezer United Presbyterian Church, Dalzell, South Carolina. The purpose was to merge Fairfield Presbytery's churches in Lee, Sumter and Clarendon Counties with Atlantic Presbytery, The Reverend George E. Henderson served as stated clerk. The Reverend Abraham H. Prince served as moderator, convener, and dissolved judicatories.

A NEW BEGINNING, 1959-1983

During the 1960's, the newly created Atlantic Presbytery became a member of the Synod of South Carolina-Georgia. The presbytery became involved in new areas of mission and ministry as it continued to support long established ministries. Mrs. Marcia V. Marion served as the Director of Christian Education for the Goodwill Larger Parish. The Goodwill Larger Parish was a consortium of the churches of Clarendon, Lee and Sumter Counties. Mrs. Aleen Brewer Wood served as a pariah worker and Director of the Larimer Community Center. Also, Mrs. Wood became the first female moderator of the presbytery. Mr. Benjamin B. Price became a worker in special ministries in Beaufort and Colleton Counties,

The Civil Rights Movement intensified and both laity and clergy were very active in the cause. The Reverend James H. Nelson was elected President of the state chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Some churches developed projects and programs for childcare, voter registration, tutorial, senior citizen and meals-on-wheels.

In 1972, Atlantic Presbytery became a member of the Synod of the South. Greater emphasis was placed on evangelism and leadership development in order to equip clergy and laity to move Christ's mission forward. Dr. Ferdinand O. Pharr became mission councilor. Dr. Franklin D. Colclough became stated clerk. The presbytery was blessed with gifted and talented leadership. This leadership served on councils, boards and committees of Atlantic Presbytery, Synod of the South and General Assembly.

In 1983, the Atlantic Presbytery met at the Goodwill United Presbyterian Church and voted in favor of the reunion of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. and the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The commissioners to the 195th General Assembly of United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. were Ms. Ruby Jonson and the Reverend Stanley W. Jones, I. They voted for the reunion which passed. In 1984, the nine presbyteries of South Carolina created a timetable for the establishment of new presbyteries. According to the plan, Atlantic's communicants would be distributed regionally among the proposed presbyteries D and (later to be known as Harmony Presbytery and Charleston-Atlantic Presbytery, respectively).

On April 28, 1985, the Reverend Ida M. Wells became the first female pastor of the Zion-Olivet Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. and in Atlantic Presbytery. Later, female pastors were called to Saint Luke, Harmony and Westminster Presbyterian Churches. Atlantic Presbytery is comprised of twenty-seven churches. They are:

<u>Church</u>	<u>Location</u>
Aimwell	Neyes
Beaufort-Salem	Sheldon
Bethel	Johns Island
Circular	Charleston
Congruity	Gable
Ebenezer	Dalzell
Edisto	Edisto Island
Friendship	New Zion
Goodwill	Mayesville
Harmony	Alcolu
Hebron	Johns Island
Hopewell	Walterboro
Melina	Sardinia
Mount Lisbon	Bishopville
Mount Sinai	Saint Charles

New Covenant
Salem
Second
Saint Andrews
Saint James
Saint Luke
Saint Paul
Trinity
Wallingford
Westminister
Zion
Zion-Olivet

Sumter
Wadmalaw Island
Sumter
Johns Island
James Island
Orangeburg
Hollywood
Mayesville
Charleston
Alcolu
Johns Island
Charleston

The ministers are the Reverends: E. McKay Miller, F. Perry Metz, Carnell Hampton, James Murray, Cornelius L. Campbell, Jr., Robert R. Woods, Franklin D. Colclough, Sr., Robert E. Bligen, Jr., John Henry Washington, McKinley Washington, Jr., Herbert R. Shackelford, William N. Curtis, Stanley W. Jones, I, Ida M. Wells, Morrisine F. Smith, Alonza Washington, Ferdinand O. Pharr, Warren Lesane, Robert L. Capers, Retha Mungin, Charles N. Neder, and David Blackshear.

On October 7, 1987, the Stated Meeting of Atlantic Presbytery was held at Second Presbyterian Church in Sumter, South Carolina. The meeting was called to order by the moderator, Elder Thomas J. Crawford. During the meeting, it was voted to “hold an adjourned meeting on November 29, 1987 for the Dissolution Celebration and that the Presbytery be dissolved effective December 31, 1987.”

Today, we stand on the crest of more than a century of Christian hope, faith, promises and accomplishments. As we stand on this day of celebration and reflect on the birth and development of Atlantic Presbytery, we thank God for the insight to celebrate the service of faithful ministers, elders, laymen, clergywomen, youth and children to Atlantic Presbytery. We are glad the Lord has allowed us to be part of the Atlantic Presbytery and uplifting His kingdom on earth. Let us wholeheartedly join the psalmist in praise and gratitude for what has been done.

“The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” (Psalms 126:3)

Respectfully submitted,

The History Committee



Rev. Stanley W. Jones, I - Chairman
Elder Lois Simms
Elder Mary Frances Brown
Rev. Cornelius L. Campbell, Jr.
Elder Johnalee B. Nelson
Dr. Agnes Wilson
Elder Dorothy Smith