

History of Kelley's Chapel United Methodist Church (abridged and updated)

Begun on November 22, 1898, Kelley's Chapel fulfilled the dream of James Thomas Kelley. Mr. Kelley and his neighbors decided that a church should be constructed in the area and they built it on the site where the present Cobb Fellowship Hall sits. During a conference of religious leaders, relative to the forming of a new church, Mr. Kelley agreed to donate the land and a sum of money for the building. After much consideration, the church was named in honor of James T. Kelley, thus bearing the name, "Kelley's Chapel".

Kelley's Chapel burned on Sunday, March 16, 1924 when a fire erupted at about 11:00 a.m. in the ceiling of the church from the pot-bellied stove that was used for heating purposes. The church was completely destroyed. One month later, with only one "preaching" service missed, the new chapel had been completed and was ready for worshippers.

In 1954, church school rooms were added to the sanctuary. The parsonage at that time was at 3364 Kelley Chapel Road, completed in 1961. In 1963, the church office building was constructed and additional rooms were added to the sanctuary. In 1970, the new sanctuary was completed. In 1975, an additional wing was added to the church and the Activities Building was constructed. In 1978, the church purchased the present parsonage at 4225 Port Chester Way. The Activities Building was re-named Jules Mainor Life Center in 1993 in honor of an outstanding youth in our church who died of leukemia.

The church has been served by 48 pastors. Prior to 1942, the pastors were all full time ministers. From 1942 to 1965, the church was served by ministers who were students at Emory University Theology School, most of whom only served for one year each.

When the church was organized, it was a member of the denomination known as "Methodist Protestant", and remained that way until it merged with the "Methodist Episcopal" Church in 1939. Later in 1968, when an appeal was made for all Methodist denominations to unite as one, the church became known as the "United Methodist Church".

As the community surrounding Kelley's Chapel became racially diversified, the theme of "Love's alive" took on a greater significance, as the church welcomed its first black family into membership in 1978. That was the family of Rev. and Mrs. Herbert Marbury. The church took on more of an ethnic diversity with the assignment of its first Associate Pastor in 1988, in the person of Rev. Earl James. In 1989, the church was presented with its first Black pastor in the person of Rev. Woodrow Williams.

During this time Kelley Chapel was facing many challenges. The greatest of these were: the need for membership growth, means of paying a very high mortgage and other financial obligations of the church, and to provide ministries to meet the needs of the congregation and the community. One of the greatest accomplishments was the Burning of the Mortgage, February 20, 1995!

We have met many goals but we continue to strive and grow by the inspiration of God.