

Canton First Methodist Church Celebrates 180 Years 1842 - 2022

Canton First Methodist was founded in 1842 and has served the community for the past 180 years. The church was originally located in downtown Canton, and for years also served as a school in an area that was small and rural.

Canton First has a legacy of caring for others in need. Because of the advocacy work of its members, the Cherokee County Family Violence Center was formed, Methodist United in Service and Training (now MUST Cherokee) began as a food closet in the basement of the church building in downtown Canton, and Cherokee Thanksgiving was created. Throughout the years, Canton First members have continually supported and helped these ministries to expand their services for individuals and families in Cherokee County.

Due to the growth in membership and the church's vision to add new ministries and services and with no additional property available on site to expand the facilities and parking, a decision was made to relocate the church building from downtown Canton. In 1992, the old building was deconsecrated, and the congregation walked across town to their new home on ten acres at 930 Lower Scott Mill Rd., just east of downtown. Each person carried something from the former building to the new church (Bible, hymnal, flags). The new facility was consecrated on the same day with office space, classrooms, and a fellowship hall which served as the temporary worship space. Subsequently, the Chapel, Sanctuary, additional classrooms, and office space were added to provide the facility resources needed to serve a growing church and community.

The new facility provided an opportunity to achieve a long-awaited dream: the opening of a weekday Preschool. The Canton First Preschool has expanded over the years to serving more than 160 children and their families from the local community. In addition to a weekly preschool program, the church serves the community through local partnerships with service organizations, supports international missions helping children, and operates a Community Fund which provides financial assistance with utilities, food, and gas to those in need. Additionally, the church has an active care ministry that includes grief support and bereavement services, prayer, and Stephen Ministry. A unique outreach for the church is the Prayer Quilt Ministry which offers comfort to those facing health challenges. Canton First has a specially trained Disaster Response Team equipped to respond with assistance helping those affected by natural disasters. The church also is an active supporter and hosting site for Scouting ministries, recovery groups, and veterans, and opens its doors to non-profit and school groups seeking facility meeting and event space. The beautiful historic Chapel and Sanctuary are available to the community for worship services, weddings, musical performances, and commencement ceremonies.

In November of 2021, Canton First retired all debt on the facilities and held a special *Reconsecration and Dedication Service*, launching the church into its vision of reaching one hundred next generation families in the next five years. To help achieve the vision, work is underway to upgrade the children's and youth areas with a new playground and covered entryway, along with other facility improvements to support ministries for families. The new playground will be available to families in the church and community for birthday parties and other events.

In November 2022, the church held a special service, "What He's Done and Remembering the Saints" to recognize the contributions of those who have gone before and to commemorate the 180 Year anniversary. Canton First continues to grow and welcome new members, as together we "Share Life, Share Christ, For Others."