



History of Prospect United Methodist Church

Ebony, Virginia

From "A History of the Ebony, Virginia Area" 1993
with updates added as of September 2019

Prospect's roots date back to the 1730's as Roanoke Chapel. The present Prospect Church sanctuary, third location and initially a one room building that comprised the entire church, was built in 1887 on land given by W. J. Carroll. In 1932, through efforts of the Women's Society and the Ladies Aid Society, the building was repaired and church school rooms added to the back with upstairs rooms. The pulpit was moved from its original place in the back to the South side of the Sanctuary. Stained glass windows were installed. In 1962 the Charge was divided and we became a part of the Brodnax Charge. In 1971, the first Fellowship Hall was added, which included a kitchen, rest rooms, heating and air conditioning for the entire building. The vestibule (narthex) and porch were added in 1975. In 1981 a steeple was added. In 1991 Prospect United Methodist Church became a station with Rev. Kathy B. Gochenour as our first full-time Pastor. Also in 1991, the Prospect Cemetery Association was established to manage the cemetery. In 1995, a Mission Statement was established: "Prospect United Methodist Church serves and glorifies God through bringing people to the full knowledge and realization of God's saving grace and purpose in our lives." In 2010, Prospect revisited and affirmed its mission statement and goals as the foundation for a building initiative and capital campaign to replace the 40 year old Fellowship Hall addition with a new, larger Fellowship Hall and Education Wing. In February 2012, the old Fellowship Hall built in 1971 was removed and much of the building material was salvaged and reused by the Old Store Hunt Club in nearby Gasburg, VA; construction began on the new addition in March 2012 and was completed by September 2012 for Fall Festival with consecration on October 3, 2012.

A detailed history of Prospect United Methodist Church is almost an impossible task. Prospect came into being sometime in the early 19th Century shortly after 1815. Before that it had been known by the name Roanoke Chapel.

Roanoke Chapel was founded in either 1733 or 1734 as part of the St. Andrew's Parish of the Church of England, which was the established State Church in Virginia at that time. Methodism did not come to America until around 1766. It grew rapidly especially in Southside Virginia thanks in part to an Anglican priest, Devereux Jarrett who served a parish in Dinwiddie County. The earliest recorded Methodist who preached at Roanoke Chapel was Thomas Rankin, the first "assistant" sent by John Wesley to America in 1776. Rankin stated in a letter to Wesley that Roanoke Chapel was in North Carolina on the north side of the Roanoke River. The exact location is unknown and different people placed it in North Carolina or Virginia.

On April 7, 1782, Francis Asbury first preached at Roanoke Chapel. It must not have been one of the more successful sermons for Asbury as he wrote in his Journal: "it may be for the last time." It was not; sometime around March 30, 1786, only slightly over a year since the Methodist Episcopal Church was founded and Asbury became a bishop, he was again at Roanoke Chapel where he "was lead to be sharp while treated on the form of godliness without the power." Asbury was here again on January 12, 1790. Asbury wrote at this time: "I rejoiced that the society had increased to more than a hundred souls." While there Asbury received a letter from James O'Kelly, then the presiding Elder of the district, threatening to use his influence against Asbury. Two years later O'Kelly would lead the first schism of the church. That same year, 1792, Asbury was once more at Roanoke Chapel on December 9 where he preached on Ephesians 2:13. The last known visit of Asbury to Roanoke Chapel was on February 8, 1815; at this time Asbury was 70 years old and had just ridden over 700 miles on horseback during the previous month preaching every night.

Thomas Coke also preached at Roanoke Chapel. On March 30, 1785, only three months after the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Coke preached here and met with Devereux Jarrett; there was an

argument between the two men over slavery. Other early Methodists who preached at Roanoke Chapel were James O'Kelly, Edward Drumgoole, William Glendenning, George Shadford, Freeborn Garrettson and John Early.

It is unknown exactly when Roanoke Chapel became a Methodist Church, it may well be that it was not Methodist property until around 1793 when the priest of St. Andrew's Parish left the Episcopal Church and became a Methodist. The quarterly conference records of 1798 to 1805 show it to be part of the Greenville Circuit. This book of records was kept by Edward Drumgoole who was accepted as a lay preacher in 1774. He married a Rebecca Walton from Brunswick County in 1777 and located there in 1786 where he founded Drumgoole's Chapel not far from here. The successor to Drumgoole's Chapel also known as Walton's Barn and Mason's Chapel is now known to us as Olive Branch Church in Gasburg.

Edward Drumgoole, Jr., became a lay preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church and was one of the people who was influential in the founding of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830. In all likelihood it was Edward, Jr., who was the founder of the Methodist Protestant Church on what is now Route 626 which later merged with Prospect. The name of this church is still unknown to us, but we believe it may have been Alliance.

When Roanoke Chapel burned is not known. What is known is that its timbers, which were salvageable, were used to build the first Prospect. This church became a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South during the schism over slavery in 1844. Mrs. Sallie Moseley, mother of Samuel J. Moseley, was a member of this old Chapel on the Virginia/Carolina border. After the membership declined and the church was little used, the membership bought the timber and built Prospect number one on land belonging to Alien Raney near the North Carolina/Virginia line.

There is a will recorded in Warrenton, North Carolina, dated 1847, stating money was left by a Mrs. Robinson toward that building which was referred to as Prospect Meeting House.

Between 1871 and 1876 it was decided Prospect number one and a Methodist Protestant meeting house which was located this side of the Kirkland home on Route 626 would combine and build a church near the center of the community. Prospect number two was built at what was the Harvey B. Moseley Store in Ebony.

We know little of the pastors previous to 1876 except that Billy Jones succeeded Lorenzo Dow and W.W. Spain was sent to the circuit in 1869. In 1871 Mr. Blincoe was pastor of the congregation. Mr. Johnson followed Mr. Blincoe and the circuit was divided during his pastorate. Mr. Pierce and Mr. Woodward were the next pastors. Mr. W.H. Atwell was the pastor at the time the second building was erected and as there was no parsonage here Mr. Atwell lived with Mr. John Williams.

The present Prospect Church sanctuary, initially a one room building that comprised the entire church, was built in 1887 on land given by W.J. Carroll, Jr. Mr. Blankenship was pastor at this time. It is told when Miss Sallie Tillman was a student at Southern Female College, Petersburg, she won a medal, which was a star within a circle. She gave this to her lover, J.D. Elam, and he asked that this design be carved and placed under the front gable of Prospect Church. In remodeling this has been destroyed.

In 1932, through the efforts of the Women's Society and the Ladies Aid Society, the building was repaired and church school rooms were added to the back with upstairs rooms. The pulpit was moved from its original place in the back to the south side of the sanctuary. Stained glass windows were installed.

In 1955 the roof was repaired, interior walls were painted, new flooring installed and curved pews from the Lawrenceville Methodist Church were restored and installed. The altar and Chancel were made smaller. A new pulpit and lectern were added.

In 1958 new aisle and pulpit carpet was bought by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

In 1962 the Charge which included Prospect and South Brunswick was divided. Prospect moved from having services every other week as part of a six point circuit to having services every week as part of a three point circuit. Prospect became a part of the Brodnax United Methodist Charge along with Bethany and Brodnax Churches.

In June 1971 ground was broken for the construction of a Fellowship Hall, which included a kitchen, rest rooms and heating and air conditioning for the entire building. The ceiling in the sanctuary was lowered and new tile installed. Classrooms were painted and new floor covering installed. Aluminum siding was put on the exterior of the entire church.

On February 6, 1972, at 4:30 p.m. a Service of Consecration was held with Dr. John Davidson, District Superintendent of the Petersburg District, presiding. The first supper was served in the fellowship hall that night. From then on money realized from the monthly suppers' free will offerings have paid for all kitchen and dining needs. "The Kitchen Fund" has also helped with storm doors, windows, and carpeting as well as other needs of the church. On November 26, 1972, Dr. Davidson returned for a note burning ceremony.

On March 31, 1975, another project was started at the church — the addition of a vestibule and porch. It was completed in May with the installation of stained glass windows. In June of that year new carpeting was installed in the vestibule and sanctuary by the Kitchen Fund and donations. In 1981 a steeple was added.

In 1984 the yard was landscaped with parking facilities and in 1987 it was completed with the planting of shrubbery and dogwood trees.

In 1986 and 1987 the church was painted inside and out. The stained glass windows have new protective coverings. The church pews have been repaired, painted, and cushions added. New carpet has been installed in all the classrooms along with new draperies. Individuals, families, the Kitchen Fund, the United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men have made this possible. Much of the work was done by individual members of the church giving their time as has always been the case when the church has needed work.

In 1987 storm drains were installed. Outside entrance lights were added in 1988.

In 1991 the church went station with Rev. Kathy Gochenour as the first minister.

In 1991 the Prospect Cemetery Association, separate from the church, was established to manage the cemetery.

In 1995, a Mission Statement was established: "Prospect United Methodist Church serves and glorifies God through bringing people to the full knowledge and realization of God's saving grace and purpose in our lives." From 1996 – 2009, there were several attempts at a major church renovation to prepare for the future that never came to fruition. However they played an important role in paving the way to eventual success.

In 2010, we regrouped and started fresh while building upon progress that was made and lessons learned with prior efforts. We first established an approach with guiding principles that unified and engendered the support and excitement of church membership. We launched a Capital Campaign with the theme, "Preserving Our Past While Building Our Future".

The church Vision Statement was introduced, the Mission Statement was updated, and strategic goals were added that all aligned with a proposed 3-phase building initiative to 1) replace the old fellowship hall (built in 1971) with a larger building that would ultimately include the new bell tower entrance and foyer, offices, choir room, enlarged kitchen, new ADA restrooms, larger social space, and a built-in audio-visual system connected

to the Sanctuary; 2) re-side and re-roof the sanctuary to match the new addition; and 3) while preserving its historic integrity, rearrange the Sanctuary seating, Altar and Chancel area to accommodate greater seating capacity — and stay within a \$600,000 budget. A multi-year \$700,000 Capital Campaign was launched with the plan of having residual building funds for the future.

From 2010 – September 2012, plans were finalized and financial resources were secured through the Capital Campaign proceeds to date along with a \$100,000 bank note that enabled Prospect to begin construction on the new addition in March 2012. We celebrated ground-breaking for the new addition on March 11. Even with significant rain delays in the spring, construction were completed for Phases 1 and 2 by September in time for Fall Festival! The renovated church was consecrated on October 3, 2012.

Prior to construction, the old fellowship hall was disassembled, transported, and reused by the Old Store Hunt Club in nearby Gasburg, VA as part of their new hunt club building. The new addition was framed using insulated concrete forms (ICF) for sustainability and energy efficiency, with the added benefit of construction speed. Chris Weddington of Richmond, VA was the experienced ICF contractor. Doug Bollinger, of Richmond, was the architect and engineer.

There were several special fundraiser projects created by church members: 1) a flagship campaign watercolor painted by William Ward Moseley with copies to be sold; 2) historic banks built from old wood from original rafters in the Sanctuary attic that had to be replaced; 3) textured glass crosses made from the glass from original windows that were removed on the upper story, backside; 4) an original framed stained glass picture; 5) The Wall of Crosses in the Narthex and 6) a cookbook, “Recipes and Remembrances” that contains a pictorial journey of the building project.

The core leadership team for the building initiative starting in 2010 through completion of construction included Dan Donochod (Committee Chair, Co-Lead (Requirements, Design, and Construction Liaison), Peggy Donochod (Fundraising Chair and Co-Lead Capital Campaign), Al Hartley (Co-Lead Requirements, Design, and Construction Liaison), Anne Hartley (Project Manager, Communications, Co-Lead Capital Campaign), and Bill Hoofnagle (Requirements and Design). The leadership team was supported by a dedicated building committee: Annette and Charles Jones, Jan and Howdy Tomlinson, Bob Wilson, James Lynch, Tim and Barbara Knox, Bob and Patricia Conner, Dede Snead, Susan and Lee Cunningham, Bev Hill, and Rev Ken Thrasher.

In 2013, the vision, mission, and 3-year goals were reviewed and updated. A decision was made to close the building project, putting Phase 3 on hold. In January 2017 a decision was made to remove Phase 3 altogether and officially close out the Capital Campaign with a revised goal of \$600,00. The final amount raised was \$600,453 exceeding its revised \$600,000 goal, at the end of January 2017.

The lighted UMC Cross and Flame was added on the front in 2015 by the Conner Family in loving memory of Robert H. Conner. In 2019, risers were added to the choir area in the Sanctuary.



As of 2012



Today

Pastors in Chronological Order

Kenneth Thrasher	2007 to present	M.F. Draper	1918-21
Myron I. Simmons	Nov 1, 2006 - 2007	J.E. DeShazo	1915-18
Susan Reaves	2004-Oct 31, 2006	E.H. Powell	1912-15
Robert (Bob) L. Hauck	1999 - 2004	J.T. Payne	1908-12
James Edmonds	1993 - 1999	J.W. Heckman	1908
Kathy Gochenour	1991 - 1993	R.H. Marks	1905-07
Vincent Mercer	1988-91	R.H. Younger	1903-05
Stephen H. Butler	1984-88	D.B. Austin	
James Burns	1981-84	W.R. Smithey	1895-99
Norvelle Robertson	1979-81	J.E.R. Riddick	1893-95
Gregory Atkins	Jan. 1977-June 79	Asa Driscoll	
S. Phillip Toothman	1975-Dec. 76	R.H. Younger	
E.E. Guldenshuh	1969-75	D.M. Wallace	
George B. Eubanks	1966-69	R.B. Blankenship	1887
W.E. Amon	1962-66	T.O. Edwards	
A. Kenneth Lambdin, Jr.	1960-62	C.H. Green	
R.J. Callis, Jr.	1955-60	W.R. Smithey	
A.E. Gingrich	1953-55	J.N. Jones	
H.G. Thach	1947-53	W.H. Atwell	
Z.V. Johnson	1943-47	W.R. Smithey	
B.T. Leonard	1939-43	John P. Woodward	
I.G. Couch	1935-37	Mr. Pierce	
G.H.I. Mayo	1932-35	W.T. White	
R.W. Burnett	1930-32	Mr. Johnson	
G.R. Rudd	1929-30	Mr. Blincoe	1871
T.E. Johnson	1926-29	W.W. Spain	1869
G.B. King	1922-25		