

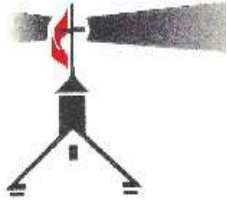
A Condensed History of Chaires United Methodist Church

Acknowledgement

Much of the information in this document was found in a previous work completed in 1992 in honor of the 100th anniversary of the church. It was researched and compiled by Gwendolyn Patterson Thompson. A copy may be found in the church library.

The present document was compiled in March 2015 as a part of the Hinton Vitality Ministry project.

Chaires **U**nited **M**ethodist **C**hurch



A Lighthouse Guiding People to Christ



Chaires UMC has a rich history in eastern Leon County. Although the officially recognized beginning date for the church is 1892 the roots go back even further.

In 1863 Mount Zion Church, a Methodist Episcopal Church South, was located about 2 miles southeast of Chaires Community. In 1887 Mount Zion Church divided. Part of the members remained at Mount Zion while others formed New Hope Church which was located in the Rose Community about 5 miles south of Chaires. The denomination remained Methodist Episcopal Church South.

New Hope Church purchased land in 1891 from Ormand and Rosa B. Chaires for the sum of \$20.00. A new building was constructed and the church relocated to the Chaires community. The first service was held in January of 1892. The denomination remained Methodist Episcopal Church South. This became Chaires Church, though it was also referred to as New Hope until 1908.

In 1939 the denomination name was changed from “Methodist Episcopal Church South” to the “Methodist Church”.

In 1969 the Methodist Church and the United Brethren Church united and became known as the “United Methodist Church”

Today we have people in our congregation who are descendants of the early church members

Original Chaires Church Completed in 1892



In the 1940s the church was wired for electricity, a new roof was put on and the steeple was remodeled

In the 1950s the building was painted, a new floor furnace was installed. An annex with Sunday school rooms and restrooms was added and the inside remodeled including installation of acoustic ceiling tiles

In the 1960s a new roof, venetian blinds, three window air conditioners and aluminum siding were installed. A lighted cross was placed on steeple, pews were padded, and hand rails were added on church steps.

In 1975 new windows were installed and a stained glass memory window added at the front of the sanctuary.

In 1990 a new roof was put on the church annex

In 2013 – 2014 a new septic system was installed. The Inside of sanctuary was remodeled, including acoustic ceiling tile removal and painting.

Historic Church Today



Multipurpose Worship Center

In 1997 a new worship center complete with classrooms, nursery, kitchen, and restrooms was built.



The multipurpose building was intended to be used for a fellowship hall and day care.

Around that time, the Rock United Methodist Church on South Monroe street in Tallahassee closed. Many of the members of that church began attending Chaires. The resulting growth of the Chaires congregation made services in the historic church crowded. The decision was made to move regular Sunday service to the fellowship hall.

The altar table, pulpit, baptismal, and two large chairs used in the “new” sanctuary came from The Rock.



There have been many improvements to our facilities since 1997, including the following:

- An elevated platform at the front of the sanctuary with a stained glass background.
- The sound and AV systems have been upgraded and a control booth added.
- An education facility has been added on the east side of the multipurpose building.
- Storage closets have been added on both sides of the Sanctuary.
- A new large storage building has been placed next to the education facility
- The church sign has been relocated to the church property.
- A new water treatment system has been installed to provide clean safe water to the church and parsonage.
- The Maggie Patterson Building and the storage shed next to it have been removed because of disrepair and cost to renovate.



Pastors

Since 1892, 53 pastors have served Chaires UMC. 36 served terms of 2 years or less, 16 served terms of 3 - 6 years, 1 served more than 6 years 1991 – 1999 The last 4 pastors have served as follows:

- J.D. Amason 1991-1999
- Jim Divine 1999-2004
- Bill Ingram 2004-2010
- Bill Petersen 2010 - Present

Parsonages

From 1886-1903 the parsonage was located in Miccosukee.

In 1904, a home near the church was purchased in Chaires to serve as the Parsonage. (*Note: The Pastor in Charge wanted to live in Chaires so he could use the Seaboard passenger trains for transportation to Tallahassee and back.*) The parsonage remained located in Chaires until 1925.

In the early part of 1925, the minister, C. C. Tyler, moved into the parsonage in Miccosukee as his wife worked as a teacher there. The Chaires parsonage was rented until 1934.

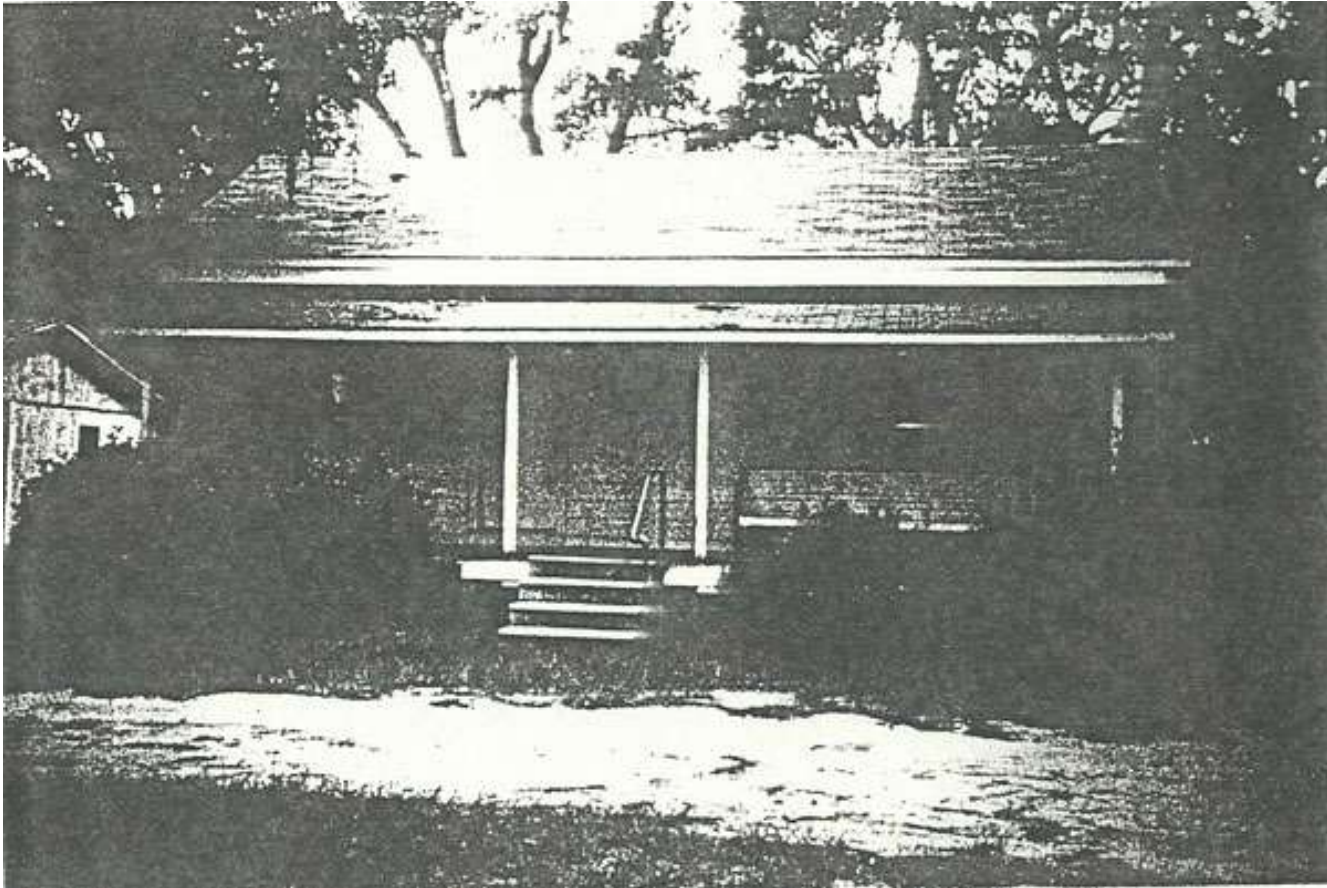
In 1934, the minister, Frank Robinson, moved into the parsonage at Chaires. The Miccosukee parsonage was sold around that time. Subsequent ministers have lived in the Chaires parsonage.

In 1965 Land was bought near the church as a site for a new parsonage. In 1972-73 the old parsonage was sold for the sum of \$12,500 and a new parsonage was built on the land purchased in 1965. In 1990 The parsonage was refurbished. In 2014 new flooring was installed in the family room and repairs made to the kitchen.

Pastor Richard Bennett, and family lived in Tallahassee from 1988-1991. Pastor William Petersen, and family lived in the parsonage 1 year then moved to their own home in 2011. The parsonage was rented from 1988-91 and from 2011 to the present.



Maggie Patterson Building



In 1960 A seacoast railroad station house was purchased for \$75 and moved to property adjacent to the church to be used for Sunday School and Church Socials (*property was donated in 1957 – it was the site of the old Baptist church*)

In 1979 the building was renovated and named the Maggie Patterson Building (*Maggie Patterson raised money for the church by rooting and selling flowers. Many church improvements and Much of the building renovation was paid for using “Flower Money”*)

In 2013 a new education facility was opened so the Maggie Patterson building was not needed. It was too costly to repair the building and the cost of moving it made it difficult to sell. The building was used for a homeland security disaster exercise and removed after it concluded.



The memory of Maggie Patterson was preserved by using wood from the building to make crosses and a memorial table (*Thanks to Gordon Lightfoot*)



Maggie Patterson and Rosa Chaires Selling Plants to Raise Funds for the Church

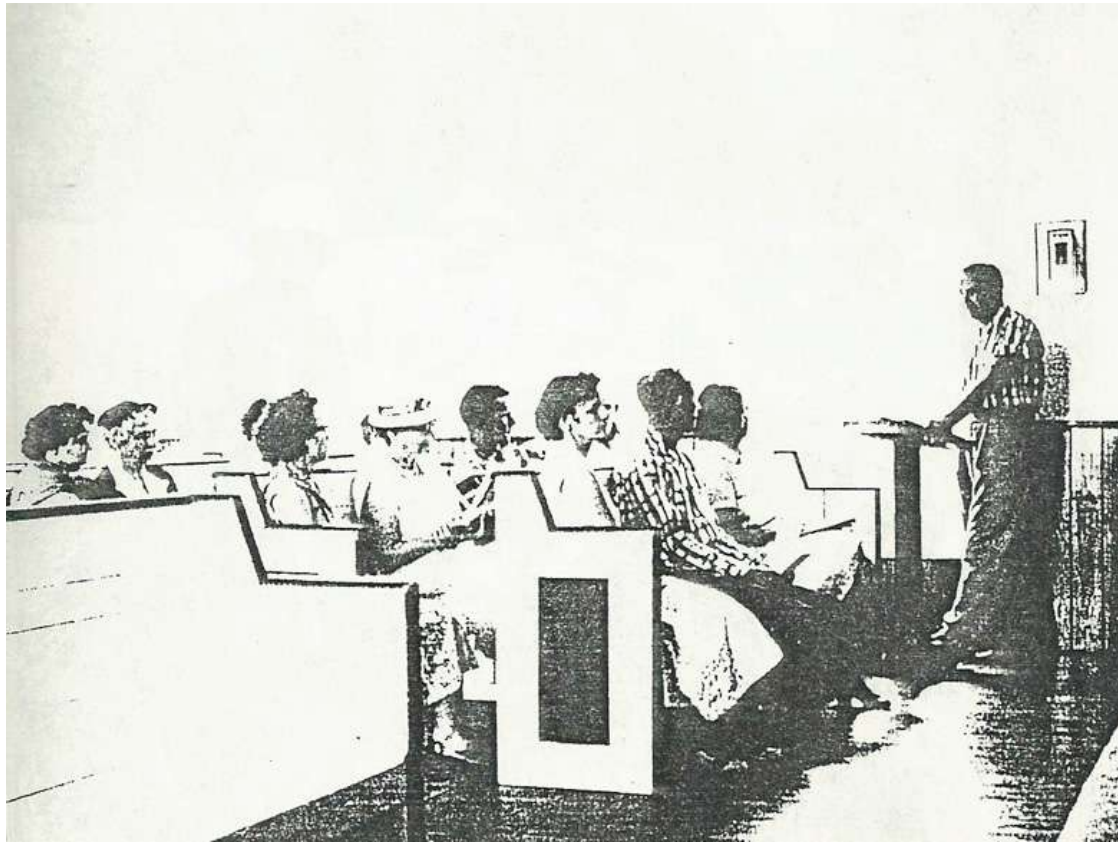


Ministry, Traditions and Outreach

Chaires began as a small "country church" and maintains that character today. It was not until 1961 that services began being held every Sunday. The services were held at 10:00 a.m. so the minister could have services in Lloyd at 11:15 a.m. We still meet at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday.

The congregation has always tried to reach beyond the Sunday Service to help others hear the word of God. Records indicate that the church has always supported the broader church ministry through financial support of the circuits and the district with which it has been associated.

Sunday School for both adults and children has been an ongoing activity throughout the life of the church. At first, all of the Sunday school classes met in small groups in the sanctuary.



In 1957 three classrooms were added to the church building and later the Maggie Patterson building provided meeting space. Today we have rooms in the multipurpose and education buildings. Sunday school attendance has fluctuated over time. At times attendance has been good and during other periods very few people attended.

A children's and youth ministry has been an important activity over the years, including a children's message, children's church, a youth group, and vacation bible school

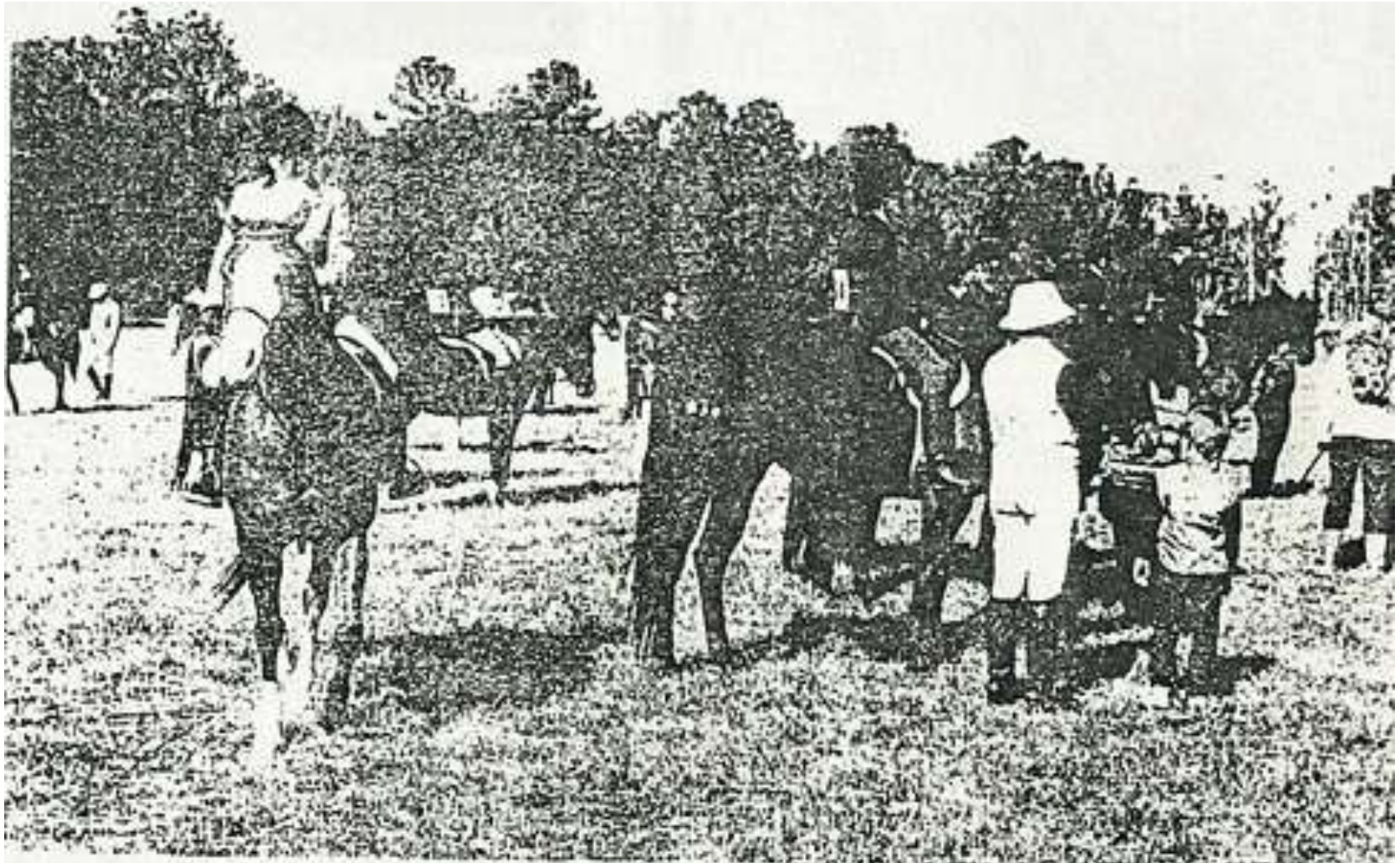
In 2013 a children's ministry director was hired to build a more vibrant program, but at present we have few children and young people and we no longer have a paid director.

A revival was held in 1899 which resulted in 13 additional church members. We also had a revival in 2013. A lay mission was held in 1973 which was reported to be very successful.

At times the church has sponsored a Boy Scout troop.

UMW and UMM groups are active and sponsor many of our church activities

A Christmas festival and hunter horse show was held in 1986 and was to be an annual event to raise funds to make up for budget deficits.



In recent times we have had chicken pilaus (each year starting in 2008), craft shows, trunk or treat at Halloween, yard sales, and Boston butt sales.



Chairs supports ECHO, The Refuge House, Treats for Troops, The United Methodist Children's Home, and the mission at Porche de Solomon.

The Chaires Community

1854, the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad began construction through Madison, Jefferson and Leon Counties. The railroad is still here and when the train passes the crossing on Chaires Crossroad it can make you late to church.



The Chaires family owned the land ten miles east of Tallahassee, and at the completion of the railroad in 1858, the community of Chaires was established

Chaires was the center of a thriving cotton business. In 1911 there were two cotton gins and a large mercantile store. Gwynn Patterson owned the country store located at the corner of Chaires Cross Road and Hancock Street. The Chaires Post Office was located in this building for many years.

The high price received for the cotton caused the land to increase considerably in value, but still be low enough to attract potential residents.

In 1911 The NEW ERA EDITION of THE TRUE DEMOCRAT reported “There are Methodist and Baptist churches in the town of Chaires, and a well patronized school. The circuit parsonage is located here, together with quite a number of cozy and attractive homes. The location of Chaires is a very advantageous one, in the centre of a rich farming section, and far enough away from the city to grow into a large and prosperous community.” Chaires became more settled the community of Chaires began to grow.

Probably one of the greatest historical gems of Chaires is the Chaires School. In the Chaires area, Barrow Hill school and Chaires school provided education for the children who lived in eastern Leon County.

The Chaires school was so well thought of that children from Tallahassee attended school in Chaires, boarding with families in Chaires during the week, and going home on the train for the weekend.

First Chaires School



Second Chaires School



Now Chaires school is known as Chaires Elementary School, home to around 550 students for grades pre-kindergarten to 5th grade. Part of Leon County Schools Chaires is an A+ schools and has been since at least 2000

Chaires Elementary School Today



Starting in the 1980s fire and rescue services were provided to the community by the Chaires-Capitola VFD.

On December 13, 2000 Chaires was designated as a national historic district. It contains 15 historic buildings.

In the early 2000s, Leon County developed a new community park adjacent to Chaires Elementary School. The park has 4 Lighted Tennis Courts, 2 Basketball Courts, Restrooms, Concession Building, and 2 Standard Little League Baseball Fields.



Daniel B. Chaires was a descendent of the Chaires family. He was killed in action in Iraq on October 25, 2006. The Daniel B. Chaires Community Park was named in his memory.

A community center was also built at the park to serve the citizens of the community. It was subsequently named after Dorothy Cooper Spence, a community activist. The community center and park have become the focal point of the larger Chaires community.



Today , though the area around Chaires United Methodist Church maintains its “in the country” feeling, it is interspersed with several large neighborhoods that serve as bedroom communities for Tallahassee.

The current population in the 5 mile radius around the church is about 24,000. It is projected to increase by about 10.5% over the next five years.

About 9,000 (40%) are under 34 years of age and the average household income is \$88,000. About 2% of the households are below poverty level. The population is 68% white and 21% black.

About 2900 households (32%) have children. In 81% the parents are married. In 19% the parents are single. About 42% say they are spiritual persons but only 20% think that attending a religious service is important.

Our Church membership does not reflect the demographics of the surrounding area which indicates that 40% of the congregation would be under 34. We are an older group with most of us probably over 60.

Many of us are not part of the local community and commute more than 10 miles to attend Chaires to enjoy the small country church atmosphere.

Today Chaires UMC is located in the place it was when it began in 1892, but the characteristics of the community around the church have changed greatly.

Overhead View of Church Grounds

