

**WESLEY MEMORIAL METHODIST  
CHURCH (ATLANTA, GA.).**  
**Wesley Memorial Methodist Church**  
**(Atlanta, Ga.) records, 1904-1964**

Emory University  
Pitts Theology Library  
1531 Dickey Drive, Suite 560  
Atlanta, GA 30322  
404-727-4166

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### **Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Wesley Memorial Methodist Church (Atlanta, Ga.).  
**Title:** Wesley Memorial Methodist Church (Atlanta, Ga.) records, 1904-1964  
**Call Number:** Record Group No. 022  
**Extent:** 3.23 cubic ft. (8 boxes)  
**Abstract:** Contains the administrative records of the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as correspondence and photographs.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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### **Administrative Information**

#### **Restrictions on Access**

Unrestricted access.

#### **Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

#### **Citation**

[after identification of item(s)], Wesley Memorial Methodist Church (Atlanta, Ga.) Records, Archives and Manuscript Dept., Pitts Theology Library, Emory University.

#### **Processing**

Processed by Nancy Hall Watkins and Aimee Morgan, 1997, 2006.

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### **Collection Description**

#### **Biographical Note**

Wesley Memorial Methodist Church was organized in 1902 after Atlanta's First Methodist Church moved to a new location on Peachtree Street, leaving a great distance between it and

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Trinity Methodist Church on Trinity Avenue near the Georgia state capitol building. A central location at the corner of Auburn Avenue and Ivy Street was chosen for the establishment of a new Methodist church. The congregation met in temporary quarters until a permanent building was completed in 1910.

At the direction of Bishop Warren A. Candler, the facility was designed with an auditorium-style sanctuary that could accommodate large numbers of people. Stained glass windows constructed in Europe depicted the history of Methodism and the life of John Wesley. The church building also included office space that eventually housed several Methodist agencies and district offices, as well as the office of the bishop of the North Georgia Conference.

Wesley Memorial hosted many events that were significant in the history of Methodism and the city of Atlanta. It was home to the newly created Candler School of Theology from 1914 through 1916. The North Georgia Annual Conference held its sessions at the church in 1918-1920, 1922-1924, 1926-1927, and 1930-1954. The General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South met at Wesley Memorial in 1918, the Ecumenical Methodist Conference in 1931, and the second Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in 1944.

The Ecumenical Methodist Conference was held despite the protests of many church members who disagreed with the purpose of the conference and did not want to fund the extensive building renovation that was required in preparation for the meeting. As a result of the dissension, church membership dropped from 1500 to 986 and the congregation was unable to pay the debt that was incurred by the renovation. In 1938 the North Georgia Conference took possession of the property, allowing the congregation to continue to use the building in exchange for its equity in the property.

Church membership continued to decline over the next several years. There was an increase in membership during the pastorate of the Rev. Allen A. Phillips who served the church from 1955-1962, but the church was never able to regain financial stability. In 1962 the Board of Trustees of the North Georgia Conference voted to sell the Wesley Memorial property and apply the proceeds of the sale toward the construction of a new building to house the offices of the Conference. The final worship service of the Wesley Memorial congregation was held on June 26, 1964.

The stained glass windows were removed from the building prior to its demolition and eventually installed in the chapel of the Methodist Center on the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Ralph McGill Boulevard. The windows remained there until the fall of 2001, when they were installed in the atrium and entrance foyer of the Woodlands Complex, which is part of the Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center in Norcross, Georgia. The offices of the North Georgia Conference moved to the Woodlands Complex on the closure of the downtown Methodist Center.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists of various records encompassing most of the history of Wesley Memorial Methodist Church. A Sunday School record book contains information about the Sunday School for the years 1908-1918. Church registers from 1906-1957 list names of members as well as baptisms and weddings. Other membership lists contains lists of members of various committees and an apparently updated church membership list that was probably created

sometime after 1957. Official reports include Quarterly Conference reports from 1954-1964 and the pastor's report to the Annual Conference for the years 1954 and 1958-1962. Financial records include a treasurer's book from 1908-1911, account books from 1916, 1936-1940, and 1944-1957, as well as a ledger for the church's building fund from 1960-1963, and reports and other general financial information from 1953-1960. Also contained in the collection are building maintenance records for 1956-1963, meeting notes and formal minutes (primarily of Official Board meetings held in 1963), property disposition records after the church closed, resolutions, and a church history written in 1964.

Correspondence dates from 1956-1964 and consists of general correspondence as well as correspondence concerning a hosiery sale program initiated by the Rev. Phillips. Records from women's organizations consist of minutes of the Woman's Missionary Society (1923-1925), the Woman's Society of Christian Service (1955 and 1957), and the Wesleyan Service Guild (1955-1958). Publications include a publicity brochure for Wesley Memorial, a pamphlet entitled "Atlanta has a Bowery," and copies of the "Wesley Memorial Messenger" dated January through March 1960, October 1961, February 1962, and May/June 1963. A folder of miscellaneous materials contains church bulletins of the final worship services, a newspaper clipping reporting the demolition of the Wesley Memorial Building, and a brochure summarizing the North Georgia Methodist Funds Crusade, ca. 1964. Also included is correspondence concerning a production of a passion play that was staged at the church in March of 1959, two memos dated 1956 granting permission to lend the architectural plans of the Wesley Memorial Building, and a flyer publicizing the Wesley Memorial Adult Bible Class led by Kermit Bradford, a licensed Methodist minister and a member of Wesley Memorial. The collection also contains two folders relating to the R. Thursfield-Smith Wesleyana Collection, including a catalog and a list of contributors to purchase the collection for Wesley Memorial. Blueprints provide information about the design and construction of the building.

These records provide information about the history and administrative functions of the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, beginning approximately four years after the creation of the church and continuing through its closing in 1964. The church history includes the names of all the pastors who served the church. Quarterly Conference reports and the pastors' reports to the Annual Conference contain summaries of church activities and achievements. Meeting minutes of the women's organizations furnish detailed information about their activities. The property disposition records contain correspondence and legal documents relating to the settlement of church property after its closing. Financial records, correspondence, meeting minutes and other materials from the years 1959-1964 reflect problems of financial mismanagement and serious conflicts between the congregation, the pastoral leadership, and the North Georgia Methodist Annual Conference. A large part of the financial mismanagement occurred within the organization of the Atlanta Missionary Division. Information regarding the activities of the Division can be found in financial reports, correspondence, and publications.

### **Arrangement Note**

Organized alphabetically.

## Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Account books, 1916 June
1	1	Account books, 1936 December-1940 November
1	2	Account books, 1944 December-1946 November
1	3	Account books, 1946 December-1953 August
1	4	Account books, 1953 July-1956 April
5		Account books (oversize), 1959-1963
1	5	Account books, kitchen, undated
2	1	Account books, rent, 1952 July-1957 September
7	4	Baraca Union of America, certificate of membership (oversize), 1906
6		Blueprints (oversize), undated
2	2	Building maintenance, 1956-1957
2	3	Church history, 1964
2	4	Church registers, 1906-1936
2	5	Church registers, 1927-1961
2	6	Church registers, 1950-1957
3	1	Committee member lists, circa 1959-1964
3	2	Correspondence, 1956-1963
7		Financial records, building fund ledger (oversize), 1960-1963
3	4	Financial records, building fund reports, 1956-1960
5		Financial records, checkbook (oversize), 1959-1960
3	5	Financial records, general budget reports, 1953-1959
3	3	Financial records, miscellaneous, 1956-1963
8		Financial records, Treasurer's book, 1908-1911
3	6	Hosiery sale, correspondence, 1963 July-1964 February
3	7	Hoisery sale, miscellaneous, 1963-1964
3	8	Membership lists, undated
3	9	Miscellaneous, 1956-1964
3	10	Official Board meeting notes and minutes, 1962-1964
3	11	Pastor's report to Annual Conference, 1954, 1958-1962
7	1	Photographs (oversize), 1904
3	12	Property disposition, 1963-1964
3	13	Publications, circa 1960-1964
4	1	Quarterly Conference reports, 1954-1957
4	2	Quarterly Conference reports, 1958-1959
4	3	Quarterly Conference reports, 1960-1962
4	4	Quarterly Conference reports, 1963-1964

4	5	Resolutions, 1959, 1963
4	9	R. Thursfield-Smith Wesleyana collection, catalog, undated
7	2	R. Thursfield-Smith Wesleyana collection, contributor's list, 1911
5		Sunday School record book (oversize), 1908-1918
4	6	Wesleyan Service Guild minutes, 1955-1958
4	7	Woman's Missionary Society minutes, 1923-1925
4	8	Woman's Society of Christian Service reports, 1955, 1957

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