

A Historical Sketch of the Goldsboro Disciple Institute

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The Vision for a School

In 1904, the Goldsboro-Raleigh and the Washington and Norfolk District Assemblies met at Vine Swamp, Kinston, N.C. presented to the quadrennial session a proposal to purchase a school site. During this assembly we decided to purchase two acres of land from the Brown Brothers in Greenville N.C. for the sum of seven hundred dollars, which was paid in full. Goldsboro-Raleigh and Washington Norfolk met as one body at the time of this transaction. We held the land several years without any improvements what so ever.

Elder BJ Gregory served on the purchasing committee from the west side of the Tar River and Elders WA James and IV Keys were the committee from the east side of the Tar River. In the Annual Assembly at Broad Creek, Pantego, N.C. in October 1910, we decided to sell the land in Greenville to the Missionary Baptists and to purchase a more desirable site in Goldsboro, N.C., the site upon which the Institute now stands. It was erected the same year, 1910, under the direction of Professor Edgar Stonewall Lapadoth Whitfield, A.B., the first principal, and Professor BF Simmons, the first assistant principal. Elder Whitfield worked in the log woods getting wood to build the school. He contracted pneumonia in the while logging and later died. He did not get to see the completion of the building.

The School Opens

The first term of school began in January 1911 with quite a large attendance. It served as both a high school and junior college. Dr. Campbell was the first director of the school and Mrs. Pearl B. Walker Whitfield, wife of the late Professor E.S.L. Whitfield, was Matron.

The school was splendidly conducted under their leadership, and won the affection of all the people of the city and community. But just at the time when the outlook was so bright for the continued success of the institution, the principal died. His death was a distinct shock to the whole community and also to the Assembly. After his death it was decided that the school should close until next term. Miss Fleta Battle, sister of Professor Whitfield, was hired to teach in his place. After her term expired in the spring of 1912, the school was inactive until 1914, when the first quadrennial Assembly was held at Greenleaf Church. Professor E.F. Simmons was elected principal and Mrs. Simmons was elected Matron. He had a successful term. The school was not opened the next term due to insufficient funding. Then two more years lapsed before it was opened again.

In 1917, Professor J.S. Thornton was elected principal. He had a successful term. However, because of indebtedness incurred while remodeling of the building, we were unable to open for the term of 1918.

In November 1919 the school was opened for the first time with dormitory accommodations. Professor John F. Whitfield was elected principal and Mrs. Nancy Moses was Matron. The enrollment was eighty-five. Professor Whitfield was again elected in 1920. The institute was opened October 11, 1920 with a teaching faculty of three and an enrollment of 108. The term was very successful and highly satisfactory to all. One student was promoted to the Third Year Normal Department for Graduation in 1924. Miss Louise Kirby of Princeton, N.C. graduated from the State of Normal School at Fayetteville, N.C. (today known as Fayetteville State University) and entered the professional field. At the close of the term the service rendered by the principal and Matron Hattie Moore was so satisfactory that they were re-elected for the next term, which began on October 4, 1921. The enrollment for the term was about 120. The dormitory was crowded and overflowing. We used four to five teachers. Mrs. Minnie L. Meadows was elected Matron. The term was very good. The building overlooked the city of Goldsboro, N.C. from the North, and it therefore invited the warm sunshine of the cold winter into its front yard and porches.

The Washington and Norfolk District Assembly sold its share and interest to the Goldsboro-Raleigh District Assembly on March 15, 1921.

In 1936 the doors of the Goldsboro Disciple Institute were closed because of the lack of repairs to the building. In 1944 the doors of the Goldsboro Christian Institute were reopened in the present building. Individuals who served as directors and their deans of the Institute since that time include: Dr. J. B. Lehman and his wife; Dr. CL Parks, Director, from 1944 to 1958; Elder Claude Walker, Director, from 1958 to 1960; Dr. James Lee Melvin, Director, and Sister Elsie Dove Garner, Dean, from 1960 to 1973; Sister Elsie Dove Garner, Director, and Elder James Peter Chapman, Dean, from 1973 to 1983; Dr. James Peter Chapman, director and Brother Gerald Keith Johnson, Dean, from 1983 to 1990; Dr. Gerald Keith Johnson, Director, and Sister Herlene R. Best, Dean from 1990 to 1996; Professor Herlene R. Best, Director, and Elder Oynx Martin, Dean, from 1996 to 1999; and Dr. Gerald Keith Johnson, Director, and Dr. Timothy Peppers, Dean from 1999 to present.

The original name of the school was The Old College for Colored People. Since then the name has changed twice. While in session in 1972, the District Assembly voted to delete the word "Christian" and to rename our education facility the "Goldsboro Disciple Institute School of Religious Education."

From 1960 to this present time the school has undergone many instructional, personnel, and facility changes. Courses were created to provide college level religious training for our ministers. A partnership was established with Atlantic Christian College (now Barton College) to provide teachers and professors for the Goldsboro Christian Institute.

The summer Youth Leadership Conference was organized in 1954 to promote Christian education and spiritual fellowship among the young people of the Assembly. Summer conference, as it was affectionately called, served as a springboard for many of the bright young men and women who have proven themselves as spiritual leaders and scholars on the local, state, national, and international levels. Again, Drs. Parker, Walker, Melvin, Chapman, Johnson, Peppers, Elders Katrina Goldsby, Valerie Melvin, Dr. Phyllis Forte, and Sister Garner served as Summer Conference directors and coordinators over the years and were very instrumental in organizing activities to spiritually mold and shape the minds of countless young disciples of Christ during their two-week stay at the Institute.

Realizing the need to expand course offerings and to provide religious educational experiences for all areas of the church, the curriculum was revamped in 1983 to include courses for other church officials, deacons, mothers, trustees, ushers, Sunday School personnel, and church secretaries. In 1984 we began using our own members who were professionals in their own right as instructors for the Goldsboro Disciple Institute.

On March 26, Our Lord's Year 1999, the Goldsboro Disciple Institute's School of Religious Education reached yet another milestone in its proud history. Thanks to the diligence and hard work of then Deacon Timothy Peppers, the school received accreditation for programs offered and is now an affiliate of the Friends International Christian University (FICU), Mercado, California.

Through the work with FICU, the school was reorganized with Dr. Gerald K. Johnson serving as its first president and Dr. Timothy Peppers as the first dean of Religious Education. In 2003, Dr. Johnson stepped down from the presidency to fulfill pastoral and professional obligations. Dr. Peppers was named President of GDI, Dr. Maevone Thompson was selected as Vice President and Dr. Dorothy Best was appointed as the Dean of Students.