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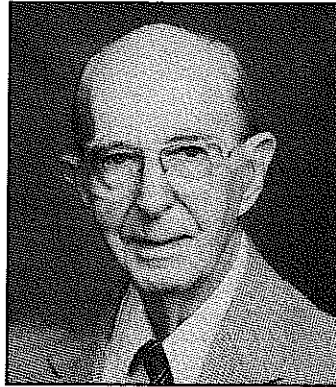
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CHARLES WESLEY CLAY
 May 31, 1907 – January 28, 1998



Charles Wesley Clay was born in Hickory, North Carolina, on May 31, 1907, to John Wesley and Myrtle Hendley Clay. He went to Brazil at the age of six with his parents, who started a Methodist Publishing House in that country. At the age of seventeen, he returned to the States to begin his higher education. He attended Rutherford College from 1924 to 1926 and then received his A.B. degree from Duke University in 1929. His B.D. degree was earned at Duke Divinity School in 1932, and he pursued further graduate studies at Scarritt College (1935), the Hartford Theological School, and the Kennedy School of Missions (1941).

His first church membership was at the Igreja Metodista Central in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He was admitted on trial in the Western North Carolina Conference in 1932. In 1934, he was admitted to full connection and ordained a deacon, and he was ordained elder in 1937 in Juiz de Fora, Brazil.

Charles Clay began his ministerial career in the Western North Carolina Conference of The Methodist Church in 1932, serving the Hot Springs charge until 1933 and then moving to the Whittier charge, where he served until 1935.

In October 1935, responding to a call he had received at an early age to serve God as a missionary, he accepted an appointment to Brazil. He sailed in January 1936 and served as head of the department of religious education at Granberry Theological Seminary and Bible professor at Granberry College in Juiz de Fora. From 1936 to 1941, he was also Conference Secretary of Christian Education and Social Action, organizing the first national Methodist Young People's Conference in 1941, and was also the pastor of several churches. In 1942, he was sent to open the Methodist work in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, and became district superintendent of the Vitoria District in 1943, serving in that capacity until 1947. While in Vitoria, in 1946, he assumed responsibilities as General Secretary of Social Action for the Methodist Church of Brazil, a position he filled until 1950. During this time, he organized the Evangelical Institute in the interior of the state of Espirito Santo to provide practical Christian education for young people in rural areas. The years 1950 to 1965 saw Mr. Clay appointed to Sao Paulo as General Secretary of Christian Education for all of Brazil. From 1965 to 1966, he was superintendent of the Brasilia Mission and pastor of Brasilia Central Church and had daily radio and weekly television programs. He received a furlough to the States in 1967 and then returned to Brazil in 1968 as pastor of churches in Juiz de Fora, retiring in 1971.

During his distinguished career, there were many accomplishments and special areas of service, including the founding of the Rural Institute, membership on the boards of many universities, and a term as Methodist representative on the Evangelical Confederation of Brazil. He traveled extensively throughout Brazil, leading many training seminars, vacation Bible schools, and radio programs. In addition, he started two magazines and was the author of ten books.

After retirement, he and his wife, Helen, moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. They traveled the world as goodwill ambassadors with the Friendship Force and continued to speak about Brazil in many churches throughout the southeastern part of the United States. They eventually moved to the Triad United Methodist Home, where they led worship services and assisted with many other activities.

Charles Clay was married to Helen Witherspoon on December 30, 1932. They had four children: John Witherspoon, born on February 22, 1939, and died in 1995; Robin (Ach), born on May 12, 1934; Helena (Reed), born on May 8, 1937; and Linda (Scherl), born on December 18, 1942. Mrs. Clay predeceased her husband on January 12, 1995. Their three daughters survive, along with three grandchildren.

On January 28, 1998, Charles Wesley Clay died at his home at the Triad United Methodist Home (Arbor Acres). A memorial service was held on February 6 at Arbor Acres, followed by a graveside service at Forsyth Memorial Gardens in Winston-Salem.

The classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, starring Jimmy Stewart, comes to mind. Charles demonstrated how "wonderful life can be" when one follows what became the guiding principle of his life, "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God." This was the foundation of his faith and resulted in his enthusiasm for life and his concern for the needs of all people. There are many people throughout the world today who are leading better lives because they came to know the love of God in Christ through the witness of Charles and Helen. Charles' accomplishments are many, but the lasting legacy of this humble servant of God is the love and grace of God reflected in and through his life.

Douglas L. Suggs