

## The History of Bethany United Methodist Church

Bethany Methodist Church was founded in 1875 when families in the neighborhood decided there was a need for a place to worship closer to home. The churches these families attended, New Salem and Gray's Chapel, were several miles away and during those horse and buggy (wagon) days, bad weather and rough roads made the decision to begin organizing a church in the area an easy one.

Rene Julian opened the doors of his home to the interested families and there under the direction of the Rev. W.H. Peoples, a district leader in the Methodist church, the plans were finalized and a new church was established in September of 1875.

The eighteen charter members, Tobias Julian and wife Phoebe Jester Julian, Solomon Redding and wife Lucian Allred Redding, Joshua M. Rough and wife Sallie Julian Routh, Mary Davenport Smith, John R. Brown, William H. Patterson, Sarah Julian, L.W. "Bud" Julian, Lindsay Julian, Caroline Julian, Elizabeth Love Julian, Mary Patterson Julian, Rene Julian, Esrom R. Trogdon and Issac Julian chose Bethany, meaning House of God, for the name of this new place where they could worship and praise God.

Lindsay Julian, His sister Mary Maritia Julian Routh and her husband Neese Routh donated two acres of land for the building site. They chose a gently sloping knoll that overlooked the surrounding hills and valley where one could feel closer to God, the same spot where we worship today.

A brush arbor was the first structure built on this site and the Rev. Z.C. Lineberry preached the first sermon under it on the first Sunday in August 1876. Later in the 1870's the first church was completed. This was a wooden building facing south with three windows on each side that served the community until 1904. This church, on the Randolph Charge, was Methodist protestant and the Rev. W.H. Peoples, who directed the organization of the church, preached the dedicatory service. The first grave in the cemetery was that of the infant son of I.A. and P.M. Coe.

By 1900 membership had soared to over one hundred and more space was needed. A new sanctuary was completed in 1904 at a cost of three hundred dollars. This was a white, wooden structure facing west with four windows per side and a tall steeple reaching toward heaven. . The first well was dug in 1908 by Claude Routh and John Jenkins. J. "Tom" Hayes gave a mantle-type clock which hung on the left side of the sanctuary near the front row of pews.

Sunday mornings found the men seated on the left and the women on the right. The choir was in the front right corner. Classes were separated by curtains drawn across wires that were attached to the walls. Wood heaters sat at the front on each side of the sanctuary with their tall stove pipes, supported by wires attached to the ceiling and met above the center front to extend through the roof.

In 1935, six new classrooms were added on the north side of the church that were mainly used for the children and youth. In 1946, the first infant baptism service was held by Rev. Curry. With membership nearing three hundred in the 1950's, expansion was again necessary. Five classrooms were built on the south side of the church and two years later the sanctuary was enlarged, the narthex and porch added, new furniture purchased and the entire structure bricked. Dedication services were held May 18, 1958. A new well was bored and water fountains installed in 1960-61. A much needed fellowship hall was built in 1964 and a church library was started.

Bethany was on a four church charge with Bethel, Gray's Chapel and Shiloh from 1921 until 1950. The Bethany-Gray's Chapel charge was formed in 1950. There were two name changes throughout the years. In 1939, we became the Methodist Church and in 1968, we became The United Methodist Church.

In 1974, Jimmy Scott, one of Bethany's young men was called into the Methodist ministry. In 1975, Bethany became a station church and the parsonage was built.

In 1996, renovations were again completed on the sanctuary. We redesigned the pulpit area, had the furnishing refinished, the sanctuary carpeted, the sound system moved and upgraded, additional lighting installed, pastor's study and other offices carpeted and all interior walls painted. All the carpentry work and many other jobs were done by members of the church, many who are

descendants of the founders of Bethany and the men who built the original sanctuary. In 2000, Stain glass windows were added to the sanctuary.

This is a VITAL time to be alive. Much has changed in the past 139 years, however the purpose for Bethany United Methodist Church has not changed. Bethany was founded because our forefather's felt the need to have a community church where we could worship, praise God, and teach our children the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our vision is to reach out into the community with inspirational worship that connects people with God through Jesus Christ. We want to be a life changing witness to the community by transformational leadership by adapting to changes in our community so we can lovingly lead all to Christ.