

HISTORY OF  
BETHEL METHODIST CHURCH  
NOVEMBER 5, 1965

It was recorded in 1895 that the oldest citizens of that date credit the founding of Bethel Methodist Church in the year 1800.

The Building originally was located just across the Wayne County line in Greene County. In 1840 the building was moved one mile to its present location in Wayne County upon land given by J.C. Exam and his wife. It is stated that Henry Johnston and Thomas Smith were influential laymen at this time. Although the first pastor is unknown, it is recorded that Rev. William Cuningim was among the first to serve the church.

There is no recorded history from 1840 until 1943 except the names of a few pastors and the dates they served. These men were: W.W. Rose, 1888-1889; M.H. Tuttle, 1889-1890; A.R. Raven, 1890-1891; R.H. Broom, 1891-1893; J.E. Bristowe, 1893-1894; George T. Simmons, 1894-1895; J.F. Hill, 1895-1898; T.H. Sutton, 1898. Among the first recorded marriages were William A. Parks and Emma V. Newsom on 14th March 1895.

Records are not available but from membership rolls it is ascertained that the church continued its growth in witness and in members until the early years of the depression when attendance and support dropped radically. However, the church did not cease to function and this is accredited to the efforts of interested laymen and laywomen of whom Mrs. Sallie Cobb, B.W. Pate and John Creech were influential. It is stated that many times there were only one or two present for the worship service. However, the church never closed its doors.

Then in October 1943, by Divine Providence, the Rev. J.D.A. Autry was appointed to the LaGrange Charge of which Bethel Church was a member. Windows were out, there were no steps, and the structure leaned heavily on timbers for its support. The Rev. Autry had been advised to simply abide his time until the church could be closed. There stirred in this Man of God a great challenge and under his guidance, within a short time interest was again being stimulated. Through the generous gifts of laymen and laywomen such as Mrs. Adell Cobb Baker, Mrs. Heddie Ham, Mr. John Creech, and Mr. B.W. Pate, the church began an uphill climb and before the end of 1943 Brother Autry had already inspired the members in a renovation of the sanctuary; it being repaired and repainted. The church grew swiftly in interest and membership. In 1949, again under the guidance of Rev. J.D.A. Autry, five Sunday School rooms were added, with all labor and materials being contributed by the laymen of the church. A Woman's Society of Christian Service and Methodist Youth Fellowship were organized. The M.Y.F. purchased a bus which contributed to its growth into one of the largest groups in the Conference. It was during this time that seed were planted which later resulted in two young men entering the Methodist Ministry. They were McGee Creech and James Smith.

In 1951, the Rev Autry was re-appointed and the Rev. Daniel Schores came to serve this growing church. Bethel was that year taken from the LaGrange Charge and placed on the Goldsboro Circuit with Elm Street, Falling Creek and Providence churches.

In 1953, the Rev. Tommy Tyson was appointed to the Goldsboro Circuit and served until 1954.

In 1954, the Rev. Aaron Tyson was appointed and served for one year. In 1955 the church was again changed from the Goldsboro Circuit to the Beston-Bethel Charge.

In 1955, the Rev. Leonard Mayo came to the Charge and served until 1959. Under his pastorate a parsonage was built for the first time, for this two point Charge.

In 1959, the Rev. John Bryant was appointed and served until 1962. Under his pastorate another building program was initiated in which four other Sunday School rooms were added as well as two bathrooms and a kitchen. Again the initiative for this building program was supplied by interested laymen.

In 1962, the Rev. Fred Pierce came to the Charge and served until 1963.

The present pastor, the Rev. Jere A. Rouse, was appointed in 1963 and serves to this date. The Church and Church School have continued their growth; the indebtedness has been paid in full, a Methodist Men's Club has been organized and the church is strong in all respects. Under God's direction and blessing and with the earnest effort of the pastor and the entire membership we look forward in confidence that Bethel Methodist Church shall continue her Divine Appointment and shall remain a strong witness for the spread of God's Kingdom in this area.