

**THE STORY OF
METHODISTS IN BATH, NC**

FROM COLONIAL TIMES

TO

THE PRESENT

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Dedication

This entire body of work would not have been undertaken but for the vision and perseverance of Francis B. Parrish. Thank you Fran, for all you have done for your church and for your Lord and Savior.

Resources

Archives of The North Carolina Methodist Conference

Archives of Duke University

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INTRODUCTION TO BATH TOWNE

The early history of Bath Methodist Church is veiled in mystery; however, we did discover a little about Bath village. It was first settled around the 1690's by the French Protestants from Virginia and The European settlements that cropped up on the banks of the river and inlets.

We discovered that John Lawson, a Scotsman, was educated in England and sailed to the town of Beaufort in Carteret County N. C. in May 1700. John was a naturalist and studied the plants in that area.

In 1701 John came to Bath Village and was met by a Mr. Smith. He was well received and became a leader of the people there. By 1705 John began drawing a map and laying out the plots of land to establish the village. The people evidently liked him because he became known as the Town Father. In 1705 he established Bath as an incorporated Town making Bath the oldest town in the colonies of North Carolina. In 1709 there were 12 houses and about 50 people.

Because of deep water in the Pamlico River, Bath Creek and other inlets, the Lord Proprietors through Governor Charles Eden in 1715 approved and decreed Port Bath on August 1, 1716 as the first official Port of Entry. Bath became a booming little trading post for ships from various countries.¹ Being a small town with a very small church, documents and records were stored in the people's attics. We asked our members if there were records in their attics, but were not successful!

Our first personal interview was with Thad Tankard, the longest active member of the church. He told us what his grandparents told him as a child about Bath history as far back as he could remember. His story showed us a glimpse into the early life of Bath Town. The story reveals that as early as the 1690's ships sailing from England brought in supplies and departed with tobacco, potatoes and other goods. Ballast stones were used to stabilize the ship during transportation of goods to and from Bath. If there were left over ballast stones, they would place them in a pile near Plum Point on the Pamlico River to use at a later date.

The people living in the town were mostly merchants, farmers, and fishermen. When the town was laid out, parcels of land began at the water front and continued across Main Street to the back of the lot. This additional land was where structures were built. The waterfront land was used for sea trading wharfs.

PART I

EARLY BEGINNINGS – WESLEY, WHITEFIELD AND THE FORMATION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

To truly understand Methodism in Bath NC, one must have some knowledge of the beginnings of Methodism in England as well as in the colonies.

Our Story Begins with John Wesley

John Wesley was an Anglican priest and a follower of the Church of England. John was a man full of thought, questions and action. He was very concerned with the poor, mill workers, orphans and widowers. In 1729, John and his brother Charles, along with two other men, began meeting weekly on the church grounds to study and discuss John's social concerns. Others joined with them over the next two or three years. They formed a club that became known as "The Holy Club" because the group had such lively discussions with their studies. Other young students (gentleman of Christ Church) said laughingly "they are a new set of Methodists sprung up." They were alluding to some ancient Physicians group.

John's group was known for basing their beliefs solely on the Bible. They were convinced that "by grace we are saved through faith; by justification by faith was the doctrine of the church as well as of the Bible. Later they added the salvation by faith doctrine. Indeed this implied three things:

1. Men are all, by nature, dead in sin,
2. They are justified by faith alone.
3. Faith produces inward and outward holiness"²

John Wesley sailed to Georgia in 1736 where he held meetings with a small group of people in Savannah. He later referred to them as his little society. After a year and a half traveling in America, he returned to England. In 1739, he formed the first Methodist societies (later called United Societies) throughout the country. The purpose of the societies was having a method for prayer, study, reading scripture and later for feeding and clothing the poor.

On May 24, 1738 John Wesley had a religious stirring at Aldersgate Street, London. "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."³ This conversion was very important to Methodism because it laid the foundation for Wesleyan teaching—that salvation comes by faith in Christ alone.

Religion in Colonial Bath

Bath County was established in 1696. St. Thomas Parish of the Anglican Church of England was formed soon after. In 1701, the newly formed Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) sent the parish over 1,000 books for biblical and scholarly research. They arrived long before a church was

built. It is possible they were placed in one of two homes in the province owned by distinguished lawyer Christopher Gale. Several volumes were checked out regularly by church leaders to enable them to conduct worship in various homes. The parish had great difficulty attracting a pastor. Finally, in 1733 John Garzia agreed to serve as pastor, and a church building was completed in 1734.⁴

The first Great Awakening movement swept through the colonies in America from 1734-1743.⁵ Religious groups that openly disagreed with some basic tenants of the English Anglican Church, the "official" church of the colony, began to speak out. "The most significant development in the religious life of colonial North Carolina after 1730 was the growth and spread of dissenting sects, notably Quaker, Baptists, Lutherans, Moravians, German Reform, and Methodist."⁶

The main figure of preaching the "revival fire" was George Whitefield. Originally from Gloucester, England, George was a wonderful example of God taking a man who was weak and insignificant and making him a major character in changing people's lives for the advancement of His kingdom.

At the beginning of his preaching, George said he "was a Calvinist who believed that one could be both a Methodist and a Calvinist."⁷ People paid attention to George, thus he was setting the stage for the Methodist movement in America. "Whitefield, the great oratorical preacher, 'who could make hell so vivid that one could locate it on an atlas,' came to North Carolina several times between 1739 and 1765, where, according to the Anglican Parson Reed, 'This surprising Minister had very numerous congregations', because 'people were very desirous to hear him and came many miles to do so.'"⁸ It is estimated that 80% of America's 900,000 colonists personally heard Whitefield preach.⁹

From an entry in Whitefield's journal in 1739, we learned that on his first visit to Bath Town, "On Saturday, Dec. 22d, they set out by break of day, and came by eight at night to Bath Town, near fifty miles from Bell's {Bull's} Ferry. ...On Sunday, December 23d, he preached about noon to near one hundred people, which, as he found was an extraordinary congregation, there being seldom more than twenty at church."¹⁰ Since Whitefield was still a student under John Wesley, he probably was introducing some of the "Method" teachings to the people of Bath at St. Thomas Church.

Whitefield returned to Bath in 1747. He was deeply troubled about what he called "Bath's deadly sins", which were cursing, drinking, and dancing. George believed that dancing, more than any other sin, was the vehicle by which the Devil sent frivolous men and women to hell.

In fact, he was so concerned for Bath that he visited the town again in 1762 to preach the gospel, but even the church refused to allow him to preach. His calls for repentance fell on deaf ears.¹¹

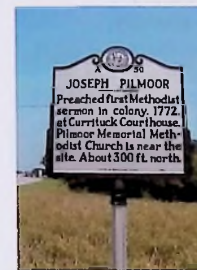
Whitefield carried his coffin with him in his travels. He slept in it at night. He wanted to have his casket handy if he happened to die while on the road. After trying to reform the people with no success George left town.¹²

Whitefield finally gave up on converting Bath. Just like the disciples of old he drove his wagon to the outskirts of town removed his shoes shook the dirt from them and put a curse on the town. He told onlookers that the Bible said people who couldn't get sinners to reform were to do just what he had done, and by shaking the dust of Bath from his shoes, the town would be cursed for its hardness of heart against the word" Whitefield declared, "I say to the village of Bath, Bath you shall remain, now and forever, forgotten by men and nations until such a time as it pleases God to turn the light of his countenance again upon you."¹³

Around 1760, Rev. James Reed, a missionary appointed by S.P.G. said he was disturbed by the dissenters. Of chief dissenting sects, "The Anabaptists are obstinate, illiterate and grossly ignorant; the Methodists, ignorant, censorious, and uncharitable."¹⁴ The Reverend George Pope, pastor of Abbott's Creek Church, said that "the fantastic exercise of jerking, dancing &c. (meaning, "and other similar things", or "and so forth") in a religious way, prevailed much with the united body of Methodist and Presbyterians, toward the close of the revival,"¹⁵

Earliest Methodist Societies in Our Area

Evidently from 1756 through the 1760's religious enthusiasm in the area waned, but "if Methodist fervor abated in the 1760's, it increased very much in the next decade...."¹⁶



Methodist preaching began in earnest in North Carolina, with Joseph Pilmoor bringing the first Methodist sermon at Currituck Court House on September 28 of 1772. Robert Williams had great success in the state the next year. Though both of these men had formed Methodist societies in Virginia, we do not have records that they did so in North Carolina. We do know that societies were formed in Newbern and Halifax (Bute Co.) soon after these men and others began work in the state.

The first Methodist Circuit in the colony was organized in 1774 and included congregations "which extended from Petersburg to the Roanoke River some distance into North Carolina. By 1783 there were ten Methodist circuits and 2,339 members in the state."¹⁸

Reuben Ellis, one of the earliest lay preachers, was a North Carolina native. He began his teachings under Pilmoor. In 1777 he was admitted in the Methodist Itinerancy, seven years before the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. For nearly twenty years, until his death in 1796, he ministered faithfully from Pennsylvania to Georgia.¹⁹

Methodist Societies were organized by lay preachers, like Mr. Ellis, who were not authorized to administer communion, perform marriages or conduct funeral services. Members of the societies were only able to have these sacraments performed by Anglican ministers that periodically came from England.²⁰

Formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America

After the war, ties with England were cut. At this point England had no jurisdiction over anything happening in America. The Anglican Church stopped sending ordained clergy to administer sacraments. Discontent over the situation contributed in great part to the organization of the Methodist Church in America.

In September of 1784 John Wesley wrote a letter to his most devoted representative in America, Francis Asbury. The letter outlined a plan that would allow preachers in America to be ordained, thus permitting them to give the sacraments. After much praying and debating with the clergy that were with him, Wesley "laid hands on" Thomas Coke. This could only mean that Coke had been consecrated as a bishop. At the same time, Wesley ordained two lay-preachers as clergy for the New World.²¹

Upon arriving in America, letter in hand, Coke met with Asbury, on November 14, 1784. He "explained Wesley's intentions and proposed to ordain Asbury immediately. Asbury, catching the spirit of democracy in the new country, refrained from accepting the ordination until approved by the American connexion. Messengers were sent, calling the American itinerants to meet in Baltimore on December 24.

Eighty one preachers were entitled to membership; nearly sixty of them were able to arrive for the conference. During the six weeks while waiting for the conference, Coke and Asbury went on a preaching tour (on horseback) that covered at least 900 miles.

Formal organization for the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States took place at that gathering, known to all Methodists as The Christmas Conference of 1784. With unanimous approval, Asbury was ordained and appointed with Coke as co-superintendent. He was ordained deacon by laying on of hands on Christmas Day; elder on the next day; and superintendent the next. Asbury's friend Philip William Otterbein, pastor of the German Reformed Church of Baltimore, also laid hands on Asbury to assist in the ordination.²²

The delegates discussed names for the new denomination. John Dickens suggested the name Methodist Episcopal Church. The Conference voted and accepted the name. Order in the church was established through deacons, elders and superintendents (later they added bishops). A Book of Discipline was adopted that regulated what the members of the church and the life of the church were to advocate. The men chosen as Elders could give the sacraments and were evenly placed throughout the states that had a Methodist following.²³

Coke later said of Asbury, "In the presence of Mr. Asbury, I feel myself a child. He is in my estimation, the most apostolic man I ever saw, except Mr. Wesley." Coke preached Asbury's ordination sermon, which was later published and caused some stir in England because he emphasized the need to ordain only godly men, and pointed to England for an example of immoral and unconverted men to orders." Ellis was one of the original ordained elders at the Christmas Conference of 1784 and was instrumental in establishing the practice of circuit preachers being able to administer the sacraments.²⁴



Just Who Was Francis Asbury?

Francis Asbury, born and raised in England, was a major influence in the organization and spreading of Methodism America. "He and his mother attended Methodist meetings, where soon he began to preach; he was appointed a full-time Methodist preacher by the time he was 21. In 1771, at a gathering of Methodist ministers, John Wesley asked, "Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them?" Asbury volunteered.

During his 45-year ministry in America, he traveled on horseback or in carriage an estimated 300,000 miles, delivering some 16,500 sermons. He was so well-known in America that letters addressed to "Bishop Asbury, United States of America" were delivered to him."²⁵

Francis Asbury was known as Methodism's first Circuit Rider, and "The Itinerant Bishop" visited every Methodist preacher in America every year. Historians said he rode around 6,000 miles a year each of his 44 years of service. Historians also say he rode horseback perhaps farther than any man in American history."²⁶

The New Denomination Grows in North Carolina

"The first Annual Conference for Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, of this new church organization was held at Green Hill's home near Louisburg, North Carolina, April 20, 1785, with Superintendents Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke present."²⁷

In 1786 the Tar River District of the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed. It encompassed a large swath of North Carolina from the Virginia border southward and had two main Circuits. This was a time of tremendous growth! As new churches were added, the Circuit names and charge boundaries were adjusted to best meet the need for everyone to receive a designated "Circuit Rider". Records were not kept of the individual Societies on a charge, but their membership numbers were used for Annual Conference records for the Circuit/District. In 1789 the previously mentioned Reuben Ellis was a presiding elder in this district.

As the church continued to grow, conference meetings were called by the state names. North Carolina attended the Virginia Conference in 1796. The eastern half of North Carolina went to the South Carolina Conference in 1824 and the western half of North Carolina went to the Holston Conference in 1824. At the South Carolina Conference, North Carolina was allowed to have five districts. By 1895 almost all the counties in eastern NC had moved from the South Carolina Conference and formed the North Carolina Conference.

Methodist theology was easy for the average man to understand. The Methodist emphasis on discipline and efficient use of circuit-riding ministers were important to communities that were far from more settled areas."²⁸

Methodist Churches come to Eastern NC

Before the Revolutionary War, Dempsey and Sarah Hinton converted to Methodism. The Hintons began to be very zealous about their religion. The Tories made them feel unsafe in the upper Cape Fear/Deep River area, so they made the decision to move to Washington, NC. They soon had several converts

and held Society meetings in their home. Being only 20 miles from Bath, it isn't hard to rationalize that they, or one of their converts, traveled to Bath to hold meetings and form a Society.

Bishop Francis Asbury's Journal February 22, 1787 says, "I preached at Washington, where many collected in the court house, whom I addressed my favourite text, 1 Tim[othy] verses 1-15. Three miles on the water and riding three more on the road under the water (such is the inundated state of the county), made our jaunt unpleasant." There were Methodists in Washington, Beaufort County, as early as 1784. It was taken into the Pamlico Circuit in 1789. The first Meetinghouse was built in 1789 by Ralph Potts, an Englishman who is regarded as the father of Methodism in Washington. Asbury also visited Washington in 1801 and 1802.

Francis Asbury traveled to different places near Bath and talked about them in his journals. One was Coinjock Chapel, an Anglican church in Currituck County regularly used by Methodist. Thomas Pilmoor preached there in 1772 and Thomas Coke preached there in 1785. Other places these preachers spoke were Edenton; Winfield Courthouse, two miles south of Elizabeth City; Nixonton, on Little River in Pasquotank County; Hertford town in Perquimans County; New Bern Bell's Chapel, one of the first meeting houses for Methodist; and others.

"It has been asserted that Bishop Asbury organized a society in Washington, NC as early as 1784, but he makes no mention of stopping in that vicinity at so early a date. However, there were Methodists in the village about that time."²⁹ During the time from 1786 until we have documents, we may assume that Bath had Society meetings in a home. Bath would have been in the Pamlico Circuit with boundaries from the Albemarle Sound to the Pamlico River. "In 1791 the Pamlico Circuit was divided, cutting off the eastern part and forming the Mattamuskeet Circuit."³⁰ These circuits were more manageable than the earlier ones, but they still encompassed as much territory as one of today's Districts. Since there are no records, we assume that Bath stayed with the Pamlico Circuit and was affiliated with Washington.

Endnotes:

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PART II

HISTORY OF BATH METHODIST CHURCH 1825-1999

A Living History

Early records of the local church simply do not exist. Some say the church records were lost in one of the many hurricanes that have hit the area. A more reasonable explanation seems to be that, since there was no storage area at the church, documents were kept in people's homes. Over time old records were stored in attics. Then, children with no ties to the church inherited the homes, cleaned out the attics, and threw away the unfamiliar records.

Our Earliest Roots 1825 – 1839

Methodists in the town of Washington held their first revival in 1791. Surely Bath converts traveled to the revival. Between 1800 and the 1840's, deeply emotional and evangelical camp meetings are credited with the rapid growth of church membership. Revivals were held in tents with preaching going on all day and usually lasted a week. There was a lot of singing, dancing, hand waving, and praising the Lord at these meetings. Records show that camp meetings in Bath were held behind the Palmer-Marsh house, so people had ample opportunity to attend. Bit by bit established meeting-houses began to replace camp meetings.

Rumor has it that the people who worshiped as Methodist met in a store on Carteret Street before the first church was built. It was a tradition for members of the church to give a pounding when a new pastor came for his assignment. The members also gave the pastor fresh vegetables and meat if they could.

We do not know exactly when the desire to have a building dedicated for worship first occupied the minds and hearts of Bath's Methodist Society. But we do know, as stated in the pamphlet *History of Bath United Methodist Church 1892-1992* : "from conference records we learn that in February of 1825 the Bath Methodist Episcopal Church was in the Virginia Conference, the Roanoke District and the Washington Charge/Circuit under the guidance of presiding elder Henry Holmes and Minister Joseph Carle." Under his appointment, land was obtained for the first Methodist Episcopal Church in Bath.

As we continued to research we wondered, how do you go about building a church? We decided to ask Bea Latham, Assistant manager at the Bath Historic Site, if she could offer some suggestions. She knew of a process called seed churches. We learned that seed churches were started in the early 1800's by other Methodist churches in the area. She said Bath Methodist Episcopal Church might have been a seed church started by the First Methodist Church in Washington.

We gathered other information and called the Methodist Conference. The Conference historian stated that when a church is built there has to be an organized Trustee Committee to take care of the finances. This would include signing a deed for the purchase of land on which to build.

We now know that a Trustee Committee was formed and in 1824 a piece of land was purchased. A trip to the Court House in Washington yielded the deed for the first Methodist Church in Bath. Nancy Cogdele sold the land, part of Lot # 39, to the newly formed Trustee Committee in trust for \$13.00.

Wondering why a female sold the land, we checked Ancestry.com to learn a little about Nancy. The 1820 census records showed that she had one (1) female slave. There was no adult male listed. We could not find any more information.

The trustees listed on that first deed were: William Smaw, Abishai Pritchett, Thomas Vines, James Corpew, Wallace Nelson, Edmund Windley, Abraham Adams, John McWilliams, and Thomas A Pritchett. These Trustees were the first members of Bath Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Trustees, and all the other men who were becoming members, built Bath Methodist Episcopal Church in 1825 - 1826. We know little about this first building. We suppose it was a rather small, unimposing structure. But it served its purpose for the next fifteen years.

Pastor Carle was followed in 1826 by Pastor William J Waller. Both of these preachers were called circuit riders because they served multiple churches in their assignment area. For many years a new pastor was sent annually. Conference records show that eleven men served over the next twelve years, 1827-1838, with only George N. Gregory repeating (1830 & 1832). It must have been a very demanding life, traveling to as many as twenty widely-spread locations and, on top of that, receiving a new assignment of churches each year. Lay members of the church served the congregation between pastor visits.

In 1836-37 a North Carolina Conference was created and separated from the Virginia Conference. The district was still called Roanoke, and Washington and surrounding churches remained in this district for two more years. In 1839, a Washington District was formed and the little church in Bath became the heart of a circuit of churches. At this time Henry Gray was pastor. Churches sharing in Bath Charge over the years include Pantego, Asbury, Pinetown, and Bethany Methodist Churches.

We remained in the Washington District until 1893, with one exception. Because of the Civil War, we were assigned for the year 1866 to the Roanoke District. We returned to the Washington District the very next year.



Our Roots Deepen 1840 – 1891

Fifteen years after the first church was built, a new deed was recorded for the 1840 Trustees: James Avent, George N Gregory, Levin B Long, Thomas Windley, Robert A. Eborn, John Tyler, and John Long.

Land was donated by William M. Marsh and Samuel B. Marsh of Bath Town in Beaufort County to the Trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The

lot, # 40 began on the corner of Carteret and Church Streets. William and Samuel Marsh donated the lot “for the interest they felt for the success of the gospel”. It was registered Nov. 6, 1841.

Turmoil in the denomination over slavery began even before it was outlawed throughout the British Empire in 1833. It came to a head at the 1839 Conference. During 1840, the denomination divided into two branches. The Wesleyan Methodist Connection pulled away in 1843 and the three-way split became official in 1844.

Bath, along with the rest of North Carolina, chose the side of the South, renaming the church the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MEC, S). However this change did not hinder the construction of the new church building.

1840 Pastor Richard I. Wynn

Pastor Wynn was received into the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1828. Upon coming to Bath in 1840, Pastor Wynn spent time helping the church body plan and execute the process of having the deed recorded for the second Bath church. He was honored to be the pastor of a church whose congregation had grown so much in fifteen years that a new building was needed. This larger church was built in a colonial type structure and faced Church St. (Now Harding Street). It had a slave gallery and a belfry. The bell in the belfry is said to have been taken from a ship in Bath Harbor. According to Thad Tankard the part of the street that the church was built on was called Five Oak Street.



1841 Pastor Washington S. Chaffin

At the Annual Conference of 1841, Pastor Chaffin was assigned to Bath. This was his first church and there were six churches on the circuit. One would describe Pastor Chaffin as a man who was disciplined. As the years of service grew so did his dedication to his God and being a pastor that fed his sheep.

1842 Pastor William Holmes

1843-1844 Pastor John T Brame

In March of 1844, about four years after the construction of the second church, Bath was the scene of a large revival meeting. The revival was held in tents erected behind the Palmer Marsh house and all churches and people in the area were invited to come.

Before the Civil War, slaves in Bath continued to come to church and climb the stairs to the gallery. However, due to the split of the denomination there began to evolve a tension in the church.

1845-1849 Pastor David W. Doub served the circuit in 1845-46. Pastor Lafayette W. Martin served in 1847, Pastor Richard R. Dunkley was pastor in 1848, and no pastor for the Bath Circuit was named at the 1849 Annual Conference. The pattern of a different pastor assignment each year remained the norm. As the tensions that would soon divide the country deepened, the ME Church, South found it harder to provide pastors to the smaller circuits.

1850 Pastor Marble Nash Taylor
When Pastor Taylor served the church at Bath there was no hint of the attitude he would reveal in late August of 1861. The following summary comes from Minutes of the December 1861 Methodist Conference expelling Reverend Marble Nash Taylor

The Reverend Marble Nash Taylor first served in the mountains of North Carolina, served on the Bath Circuit in the year 1850, and after several other assignments, was moved to the church on Hatteras Island in 1860. The morning of the Federal attack on Forts Clark and Hatteras, Taylor had preached a service to the Confederate soldiers garrisoning the outpost.

It no doubt came as a great surprise to those same soldiers then to see the Reverend standing on the top of a sand dune later that day pointing out to the oncoming Federal soldiers where to expect the Confederates to ambush them.

Taylor and a small group of local people still loyal to the United States forged ahead with plans for a war-time government. In November 1861, he was proclaimed acting governor by those still loyal to the United States, to no avail. In May of 1862 Lincoln appointed Edward Stanly as war-time governor in the occupied coastal area of North Carolina. Taylor, and his brief stint as governor, disappeared from Civil War era North Carolina.

1851 Pastor William M. Walsh
Between 1851 and 1868 Bath's church was called a mission church. Because times were bad, the Bath Circuit was not able to be self-supporting. They had to rely on help from the Methodist Conference, through apportionments, to keep its doors open. Members of the churches would bring produce from their gardens to help supplement the salary for the pastor. Reverend Kelli Sorg stated that a mission church paid no apportionments for three years and then paid a percentage until they got up to 100%.

1852-1863 The words "To be supplied" were recorded beside Bath circuit over and over again. This meant that someone may come in to fill the gap, or maybe not. In 1852 and 1862-63 no pastor filled the Bath pulpit. George W. Farrabee stepped up in 1853 and Samuel Robertson served on Supply from 1855-1857. William H. Moore served in 1860-61.

As Southern areas fell to the Union during the Civil War, missionaries from the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME-Zion) denominations began to bring worship services newly freed slaves. After the war, churches of both denominations were established throughout the south. Out of nearly 200,000 African-American members in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1860, only 49,000 remained in 1866. It is unlikely that the Bath MEC, S had any black members at this point.

1864-1868 Due to the Civil War, Bath had no delegates to the Annual Conference. No new pastoral assignment was made on the Bath Circuit until 1869, though James Mahoney stepped in for the year 1868.

1869-70 Pastor Robert P. Bibb

1871 Pastor H. F. Wiley



1872-1875 Pastor Leonidas L. Nash (Supply)
Leonidas Nash was to become one of the most respected Methodist pastors of his time. After serving the Confederacy, young Nash told his pastor, Rev. Ira T. Wyche that he felt called to be an itinerant pastor. His Presiding Elder, Rev. S. D. Adams thought he should go to the Conference in December of 1872 and ask to work on supply. So it was that Bath Circuit in Beaufort County became his first assignment.

To start his journey to Bath from his home in Halifax County, Nash arranged for a friend to take him to Enfield to catch the train to Rocky Mount and Tarboro. The night before he was to leave, it snowed and his friend refused to take him to Enfield. L. L. began walking the 15 miles so he could get to his appointment. According to Nash's published memoir:

"Satan attacked me with all sorts of trying questions. As I walked over the snow carrying my suit case, he said to me: 'What a fool you are. Don't you know if God had called you into the ministry, you would not have met with such a disappointment at the start?' I did not know from whom these questions came, and began to feel very much like a fool for starting on such a journey, under such circumstances. But as I walked along, with a heavy heart, I began to pray for help; and then Satan made a more vicious attack upon me. He said: 'Are you sure you have got religion; do you know you are a Christian, you who are going out to convert men, are you sure you are converted yourself?' I felt my sinfulness and unworthiness more than anything else. But I replied: 'If I have not been converted, I have been honestly mistaken; and if what I have experienced of peace with God, is not religion, then there is no religion; and if Christianity is not true, then there is nothing in time, or eternity worth living for. If I am not a Christian, then I will serve God until I am one.' When I came to this determination the clouds rifted. A sense of peace filled my soul, and

Satan fled from me. The Spirit of God applied this scripture to my heart: This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. John 5:4"

He continued his walk until he reached the train.

Nash's Bath circuit was 40 miles. He had six regular appointments and preached in homes and schools. He stayed in a designated home at each place he preached. His duties were visiting people in the community and preaching.

In 1873 Nash preached his first revival at Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church outside Washington. Nash preached several days and no one came to the call. He was ready to give up and went down and exhorted the people when *"suddenly the Spirit of God descended upon me and I spoke as I had never spoken before. Presently the altar was crowded with mourners and the Christians began to shout, and there was a scene that suppressed anything I had ever seen. The revival began and went on for three weeks, and some hundred professed faith in Christ and were thoroughly converted to God."* Nash formally joined the Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1874 and continued his work in the Bath region.

At the Beaufort County courthouse, we found a deed dated January 17, 1874 for Bath Town lot #33 (80x100 ft). It was sold by W.H. and Mary Ormond to Ashley Woollard, J. Baily Skittletharp, and Alfred W. Satterthwaite, Trustees of Bath Methodist Church. The Ormonds stated that they sold it to the church for "the love we bear for the cause of Christ: to build a parsonage."

A parsonage was indeed built. In December of 1873, Leonidas had married Bath resident Louise Taylor. We suppose they moved into the parsonage when it was completed. January 18th 1875, a son was born, Leonidas Closs Nash. Louise developed an illness that lasted three months. She almost died, and then lost her mother, sister and her little son within a few months time. At this point Nash moved his family to Washington. He preached there and rode the Bath Circuit. We have no idea what became of the ownership of the parsonage lot. We found no deed of sale. The area has been reconfigured, so it is difficult to pinpoint the exact location.

1876-1883 Five different men were assigned at Conference to pastor the Bath circuit over these eight years. We found no evidence of attendance records kept at this time. We can only assume there were faithful congregants.

1884-1886 Nathan Guyton (Supply)
Nathan Hall Guyton was a member of Singletary Church in Bladen County, NC. He was ordained as an exhorter of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in April of 1873. This ministry gift is described as someone who has ability as a prophet or to encourage, comfort, challenge and motivate others towards right action.

Licensed to preach in 1877, Guyton served as pastor at several places in North Carolina, and arrived at the Bath church in December, 1884. He was admitted on trial December, 1885 and was considered a preacher in "full connection" in 1888.

Pastor Guyton took on the task of recording names of families in a Church Register. The first names we found were the families of Trustees listed on various deeds.

In addition to the families of his current trustees Ashley Woollard, J. Baily Skittletharp, and Alfred W. Satterthwaite, the register revealed the names of Silas Woolard, Caroline Skittletharp Woolard, Benjamin Draper, Sallie Draper, Mary E. Tarkington, Betty Pearce, and Parnelius L. Pollard.

We found that Benjamin J Draper, born in 1841, hailed from Clay Root in Pitt County North Carolina. According to the 1890 census, he and wife Sallie had five children; Emma, Thomas, Mary, and twin girls Florence and Ella (Ellin). The Draper family became leaders in the community. Thomas grew up to become a fine photographer. His pictures provide some of the best records of day-to-day life in the early 1900's. Benjamin's twin daughters each married and remained church members. Though the Draper name has disappeared from the rolls, the Draper line continued through the surnames Adams, Brooks, Tankard, Waters and Williams.

1887-1891 Bath was served by Daniel Reid, J.Y. Pegram, W.Y. Everton and William F. Jones. Beginning in 1891 the church was found in Conference records under the Pantego Charge.

Our First 100 Years on Main Street 1892 – 1992

In 1891 the trustees; W. H. Ormond, J. T. Nicholson and the afore mentioned Benjamin J. Draper began a search for land on which to build a new Bath Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They settled on lot # 11 situated on Main Street, owned by Maude M. Gibbs and adjoining the lands of J. F. Adams, J. S. Waters and G. B. Williams. The sale was officially registered on August 5 of 1892.

With great confidence in the future, on July 20, 1891 they sold the lot and the church building on the corner of Church and Carteret Streets "to the Public School committee of District # 10, Bath Township..." and began building a new "place of Divine Worship" on their new Main Street lot. This lot already had a house that would serve as the Methodist Parsonage for many years.

Before we move on to recount stories of church life in the new location, we must beg your indulgence as we engage in a little hearsay and speculation:

- We do not know when the second church building was torn down. Rumors abound about how the building was used. Some say that an African American congregation worshiped there for a while. A newspaper article written in 1952 states that it was sold to the Baptist denomination, but a search in the county

Registrar of Deeds office revealed no such record of sale. Still others say it remained abandoned until its demolition.

- In 1921 a new public school was built just across Church Street from where the old church building had been located. As footing was being dug for placement of a boiler for the new school, human bones were found. This story comes from life-long resident and former Bath School Principal Jack Wallace. He remembers his mother telling him the tale. The story makes no mention of coffins, and we do not know of any burials the Methodists made there. We can only guess at the origin of those bones.
- We do not know what happened to the bell from the 1840 church; the one taken from a ship in the harbor. There are two bells on display within the town limits. Could one of these have been the bell from the old church?
 - The bell on display in the Bath Elementary School library has accompanying documentation stating that, "it was a ship's bell and was given to a local church. The church then gave it to Bath School." (The school building before the current one, built in 1921, was located on S. Main Street near the NC Hwy 92 bridge.)
 - There is a bell, along with an historical marker, on Front Street. This denotes the presence of an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church built there sometime between 1895 and 1900. It is worth noting that this coincides with construction of the current ME, S church building. Did this African American congregation provide a home for the bell from that 1840 church?

Back on track with the new church construction, we found this August 6, 1891 blurb from the Washington Gazette, "*The M. E. Church is going up fast. It is a beautiful Building.*" The choice of location was a wise one because the new church would sit on one of the highest lots in the town of Bath.

1892-1893 Pastor Lemon H. Joyner, Jr

Pastor Joyner was involved in the planning for building the new church. Inside, the organist played on the pump organ from the 1840 church. It was used for fifty or more years making music for all the people who came to the church. The pulpit furniture and pews in the church building today are the original ones purchased in 1892. The Communion glass and hymnbook, enclosed in the glass cabinet on the interior church wall, are the first ones for the church. The pulpit Bible, displayed in a case on that same wall, dates back to the mid 1880's and was in use until 1982.

The church purchased a brand new bell for the belfry of the 1892 church. It came from C.S. Bell Co. in Ohio, and was floated on a barge into Bath harbor. It was used for a call to worship and to alarm the town of a fire or tragedy. This bell will play a noteworthy part in our church history at least twice. We will share each story as its time comes.

1894-1896 Pastors W.E. Hocutt and Y.E. Wright
The Pantego Circuit was part of the Elizabeth City District from 1894-1901, but Bath was not mentioned by name again until 1902.

Pastor Hocutt served during the 1894 cycle.
The Washington Progress newspaper ran the following article in May of that year:

The Methodist Sunday School of this place gave a pic-nic on Friday, 18th, ... in the grove of Mr. Tim Midyette about two miles from Bath. It was a grand success. From eight o'clock till twelve the buggies, carts and wagons went well loaded down with children, young ladies and gentlemen until the number present ran up into the hundreds. Croquette, ball-playing and hammock-swinging were in order until dinner was announced, when the crowd hied away to a table laden with everything good to satisfy the inner man. After dinner milk shakes, lemonades and ice cream were quite popular. The [Sunday School] Supt., Mrs. T.A. Brooks, [was] ably assisted by Mrs. B.J. Draper, Mrs. G.B. Williams, Mrs. Thos. Pollard, Mrs. J.L. Debrony, Mrs. Tim Midyette and Mrs. Thos. Clayton, and last, but not least, [Mr.] T.A. Brooks, [Mr.] L.J. Debrony and our handsome Deputy Sheriff, N.A. Whitley.

We have no indication that this was a fund-raiser, though it is possible since the congregation was preparing to outfit the new church building. Whether to raise money or just for the excellent fellowship, you can see the prominent members of the church knew how to have fun!

Pastor Y. E. Wright served in 1895 and 1896.

We found that it was during Wright's tenure that the building on Main Street was finally dedicated. On Oct. 9, 1896 a news article in the Washington Gazette stated, "*The new M. E. Church at Bath will be dedicated (D.V.) on the third Sunday in November [the 15th] next at 11 o'clock. All former pastors of Pantego Church are cordially invited to be present. Rev. H. J. Moorman of Washington N. C. will preach the dedicatory sermon.*" (The initials D.V. stand for the Latin "Deo Volente", God willing.)

1897-1898 Pastor Samuel Leffers

Pastor Leffers received the Communion service, a silver pitcher and two silver goblets, for the church. In the early life of the church, a lovely brass candelabrum with seven kerosene lamps was one of the sources of light for evening services. Individual lamps in wrought iron holders by each window provided additional light. A large drum type wood stove was the source of heat for the sanctuary. A Chandelier was purchased and hung in the center of the church during Pastor Leffers' appointment.

1899-1901 Pastors D.B. Parker and J.E. Bristrowe added many new names to the Sunday school roster. The families of C.H. Brooks, John Ward, G.B. Williams, Andrew Emery, H.B. Respass, Harry Rice, B.C. Roper, William E. Skittlethorp, R.O. Tarkington, and William Henry Tyler were listed. The new church building

on Main Street must have been filled with worshipers every time the pastor came to this stop on circuit!

At this point we can insert a little more information about descendants of Benjamin and Sallie Draper's twin daughters:

- 1901 was the year Draper's daughter Ella married widower Gran Berry (G.B.) Williams. Williams came to Bath around 1865, straight out of the Confederate army. He obtained a home with a large back yard on the corner of Craven and Main Streets. He and his first wife, Elizabeth raised three daughters and a son there.
- One daughter, Annie Pearl died at age 16 as a result of fire. Her 1891 grave site is the first in what is known as the "Williams Family Plot". Elizabeth died and was buried there in 1901. Interestingly, none of Elizabeth's other children are buried there.
- At first glance, the sites appear to be part of Saint Thomas church's larger graveyard, but there is a whole section made up of Gran Berry's descendants from his second wife, Ella Draper Williams. When they married in 1901, he was sixty years old and she was only twenty-six. They had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Florence Louise.
- When Gran Berry died in 1909 Ella and her young daughters moved in with her father, Benjamin Draper.
- These two young ladies, Mary Elizabeth and Louise, would grow up to be staunch and faithful supporters of Bath Methodist Church. They upheld it in all the ways a member pledges to; with their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service and their witness.
- Benjamin Draper's second twin girl, Florence Helen became the second wife of Edward Waters. She bore him a daughter. They named her Helen Florence.
- Though she was twelve years younger than her cousin Mary Elizabeth and eight years younger than her cousin Louise, the three remained very close throughout their lives; staying in Bath, marrying local men and bringing up their children in Bath Methodist Church.
- Florence Brooks Richardson, her brother Roy Campbell Brooks, Jr. and his son Roy C. Brooks, III are currently the only Draper descendants on the roster.

1902 Bath returned to the Washington District and became the Bath Circuit again. In 1964 the church was assigned to the Greenville District and remained there until 2012, when districts were no longer named for cities.

1902-1904 Pastor D.A. Futrell was supplied in 1902 and remained an additional year. He inherited a growing congregation.

We can shed light on the largest family membership between 1889 and 1920:

- Cicero Hawks Brooks was born (1842) and raised in Hyde County, wounded in the Civil War Battle of New Bern, and returned home to marry Celestia Ann Midgett in 1867. They had six children. We do not know exactly when they

settled in Bath, but Ann died in 1883 and there is no record to indicate that she joined Bath M.E., South church.

- Cicero remarried in 1884. His second wife, Nancy Elizabeth (Betty) Selby was twenty years younger than he. They would have five children together. It appears that under her Christian influence many family members began to join the church. Altogether, through three generations, fifteen are listed in the roster.
- The age-spread of his children was so wide that in 1897 Cicero became a father for the ninth time and also a grandfather (not sure if it was the first). He had two more children after this.
- Cicero's two eldest sons were very influential in Bath:
 - Timothy Augustus (T.A.) Brooks (b. 1870) married Mary M. Pollard. He owned a saw mill, a store, land and was an all-around entrepreneur. He and his wife were listed as members by Rev. L.C. Brothers in 1919. He and Mary (called Molly) had no heirs.
 - Howard Lucas (Capt.) Brooks (b. 1875) married Mary E Windley and lived across the street from the Glebe house. He made a living hauling freight, produce and people up and down the river in a boat called the *Marion*. Bath history is full of stories that feature the *Marion*. His children were Marion Elmo 1897, Lena Lucille 1902, Eloise 1905, and Mary W. His family is listed in the records of the church – joined in 1911.
- In 1905 the brand new Bath Christian Church joined St. Thomas Episcopal, Bath AME Zion and Bath MEC, South, as a place of Christian worship within the town limits. As time passed many descendants of C.H. Brooks joined this church.
- Roy Campbell Brooks, Jr., his son Roy C. Brooks, III and his sister Florence Brooks Richardson are currently the only Brooks descendants on the roster. Did you notice that they are also Draper descendants?

In 1904 W.F. Galloway was supplied to finish out the year.

1905-1907 J.M. Lowder served and the attendance continued to grow with no less than 64 names added to the rolls. Pastor Lowder wrote of a sad event: *Henry Rudolph Ormond, son of Henry and Dorcas Ormond, lived with his parents at Bayside (Bayview). "On June 30, 1908, little Rudolph, in company with his mother and two sisters, and quite a number of picnickers, boarded the Marion, a naphtha launch, (an open motor boat powered by a fluid similar to camp-stove fuel) to spend the day at Pamlico Beach, a summer resort and favorite meeting place for young people. When in about a mile of the beach he thought to change his seat, when the box made an unexpected careen and dropped him overboard. Heroic efforts were made by young men to save him, but in vain. The majestic Pamlico, many miles wide and very deep claimed him as one of her many victims. In a few hours his body was recovered. The next day the writer, assisted by the other ministers of our town, conducted the funeral services at the Methodist Church. A large congregation was present, sympathizing with the bereaved family. His remains were interred in the new cemetery to await the*

resurrection morn. Rudolph was kind and obliging, -- unusually so for a boy of his years. His death was not the result of carelessness. He was very fond of Sunday-school, and liberal with his own means for the support of the Lord's cause. While it is hard for his parents and sisters to give him up, -- the only boy in the family, -- yet they have faith in God, and look forward to meeting him again in heaven." Signed J.M. Lowder.

A note about the statement above regarding Bath Methodist Church's "new cemetery": In an interview with *Life on the Pamlico* magazine, Louise Williams Tankard stated, "It just didn't ever grow as a cemetery." Young Rudolph Ormond's body was later moved to Oakdale Cemetery in Washington, NC, where his parents are also interred.

In 1908 and 1909 Pastor F.E. Dixon added another 22 people to the list. Many of these folks were families with children of all ages.

1910-1913 Pastor James Buchanan Bridgers



Pastor Bridgers studied for the ministry at the Graham Collegiate Institute in the Atlantic Mission Conference, which was purposed with establishing new Methodist churches in eastern North Carolina and along the Virginia coast.

Rev. Bridgers began studies at the Institute in 1897. At age 41, he was a late starter in his call to serve the Lord. But, he was a willing student and an enthusiastic evangelist. In his very first year on trial, he organized the new Windfall Circuit with 125 members in the countryside adjacent to Elizabeth City. After completing his course of study he continued in the Atlantic Mission Conference until 1908. At that point he was received as an Elder in the North Carolina Conference and appointed to the Ayden Circuit. He arrived to serve the Bath Circuit in 1910.

One summer evening between 1910 and 1912 a fire started in the feed barn, horse stable and buggy shelter at the Methodist Parsonage. The church bell, now almost twenty years old, rang out and members of the church and community rushed to form a bucket brigade from Bath Creek to the parsonage. The minister's horse was saved, but the barn was lost.

Research brought us two exciting tidbits about Rev. Bridgers.

- The first is about one of his eight children, Luther Bridgers. Luther was about 12 years old when his father went into ministry. In 1902 he joined his father in the Atlantic Mission Conference and began his studies at Graham Collegiate Institute. He later transferred to Asbury College in Kentucky. He became a well known evangelist throughout the southeast and took part in missionary outreaches in parts of Europe after WW I. A gifted singer, Bridgers also penned a number of hymns, the most famous being "He Keeps Me Singing", which was first published in March, 1910.

- The second discovery is that a recent member of the church, Frances Bass Parrish, was a great niece of James B. Bridgers!

Sadly, Pastor Bridgers fell ill and died on July 5, 1913. His son Luther was holding a revival in Belhaven at the time. When he got the news at the end of the third service that his father was near dying, he immediately went to be by his father's side in his final hours. The *Washington Daily News* posted in the *Pantego Society* section that Mrs. Bridgers had preached for her ailing husband the Sunday before he died. Rev. Bridgers' *Obituary* stated he "was possessed of a cheerful nature, and scattered sunshine wherever he went."

Thus, it was Rev. C. Ernest Durham who served the remainder of 1913. While he served the interim, he married Claudia Hollowell from Bethany Community.

1914-1916 Pastor John J Lewis



John J. Lewis was received into the Atlantic Mission Conference in 1900. He was admitted to Graham Collegiate Institute and on Credentials supplied by the Free Will Baptist Church, was excused from the first two years of study. He served in churches along the North Carolina coast until 1911. When the Atlantic Mission Conference shut down Lewis was admitted to the North Carolina Conference. He served two years at Bailey, NC (Mt. Pleasant Circuit) before arriving in Bath.

The North Carolina Christian Advocate ran this article in winter of 1914: *Dear brother Massey: I am about settled down in my new home at Bath. The people at Bath received us in the way of making us feel at home. I don't speak of a pounding. We have received nothing else but poundings since we got here. The people of Bath gave us a very nice pounding led by Miss Mary Nicholson and others. Then someone was responsible at Bayside [Bayview]. My son and I went down there one afternoon simply to learn the ways and someone loaded my buggy with good things while I was in Bro's Eborne's House. Brother Ebron must have been responsible as he was not with us in his home. Well the people down here know how to make a Methodist preacher feel at home. So I am well pleased with my new field of labor and I am going to do my best to get people to like me as well as I like them. We are looking for a good year on the Bath Charge in 1915. We are planning to do our best when Brother Read our new Presiding Elder comes. May all of my friends pray that God's richest blessings may be upon us at Bath this year. May our Heavenly Father bless and be with our friends that we have just left in old Nash County and may Brother Durham, their new preacher have a prosperous year. Hoping the Advocate a Happy new year.*

I remain in the work J. J. Lewis Bath, N C.

Pastor Lewis was the grandfather (her father's father) of current church member Joy Lewis Henderson! She recalls stories of his salary being supplemented by garden or farm products. Her grandfather had a horse and buggy to carry him to the various churches in his circuit.

1917-1918 Pastors Robert L. Carroway and William J. Covington Each served for one year at Bath Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Yes, the northern and southern factions of the church were still separate. They will not reunite until 1939, at which point the denomination is named simply THE METHODIST CHURCH.

1919-1920 Pastor Lloyd Crawley Brothers
Pastor Brothers added twenty-nine new members to the roster. Only four were below the age of 20. In 1920 a large Washington District Meeting was held at Bath. Thomas Draper took several photos of the event.

The first photo shows people in coats, so it must have been cold. Also notice in the photo of cars there are electric lines running along the street. When service from the church's electric panel was reconfigured in 2020, the electrician said the Federal Pacific panel he removed likely dated from the late 1940's. However, it is possible that it could have been preceded by an even older service.



1921- 1922 Pastor Robert Johnson Lough
Bath was Pastor Lough's first church assignment. He held several jobs until 1918, when at age 45 he realized a life-long ambition and joined the North Carolina Methodist Conference.

Pastor Lough added eighteen local names to the roster. Several of them were teenagers. Perhaps that was because three teenagers were among the seven children who accompanied their parents to Bath. (The Loughs also had three grown children.)

Young Maurice was only six. He recounts memories of his years in first and second grades at the newly opened Bath school. We will share just one: It was a rule in his family to wear shoes to school. Some others came to school barefooted, including the class bully. One day on the playground that bully came after Maurice. He quickly devised a plan. Some areas of the playground were thick with sand spurs, very painful to bare feet. He simply ran through those areas over and over. The bully was slowed significantly as he had to pull spurs from his feet. Maurice stalled this way until recess ended. He reports, "*The bully...never again challenged me.*"

1923-1924 Pastor T. L. Cole served in 1923. "To be supplied" is the only listing for 1924.

1925-1926 Pastor W. N. Vaughn
Pastor Vaughn was assigned to the Bath Circuit in 1925-1926. During these years the *Conference Journal* listed the names of four individual churches on the circuit. They were Asbury, Bath, Bethany, and Pinetown. Remember, each church probably had services only once a month.

1927-1930 James William Sneed was the pastor of Bath MEC, South. During his appointment, a new, larger pump organ was purchased. The church retired the lovely silver pitcher and cups and began to use individual cups and plates for communion.

Probably the most significant event during Pastor Sneed's service at the church was Gerritt and Therese Hoogendoorn joining the church. Gerritt was 37 and Therese was 34. They moved here from New York and Mr. Hoogendoorn worked on farms in Terra Ceia. They had four young daughters. The eldest, Hendrika (Hennie) was seven. Elizabeth (Betty) was five and Theadora (Dokie) was three. The youngest, Marie, was just one year old.

The Hoogendoorns were active in the church for many years. The girls grew up in the church, married and remained in Bath, except for Hennie, who returned in later years to once again work for Christ and the church. Betty's husband, Vernon Harris was a tireless worker for the Lord and a driving force in expanding the church. Hennie's son Raymond Lewis and Betty's daughter Vera Hollowell, along with their spouses, were also active in the church well into the twenty-first century.

1931-1941 The Great Depression and World War II marked a time of stagnation in new church membership, but long-time members kept the church very much alive and active. It was not unusual to find over 100 worshippers in attendance when it was Bath's Sunday on the circuit, which included Asbury, Bath, Bethany and Wares Chapel.

J.C. Harmon, E.L. Stack and F.E. Dixon served for the period of 1931-1934. Pastor J.D. Robinson was supplied in 1935 and remained through 1938. E.N. Harrison was assigned in 1939, followed by E.R. Bromley and O.C. Haas in 1940-1941.

One Sunday Morning in the mid 1930's Thomas Payne, the sexton, was pulling on the bell rope to announce Sunday school. All of a sudden the bell's huge clapper fell from the belfry and landed in the floor about half way down the center aisle. It made a hole in the floor. It also hit a pew on the way down splitting the arm. The bell was silenced. Thaddeus (Thad) Tankard, just a young boy at the time, said he remembered the incident because he ran to the church immediately after it happened and saw the hole and broken pew.

Virginia (Gin) Brooks Carson, born in 1926, was raised across the street from the church. Gin recalls that during the 1940 tenure of E.R. Bromley, a community tennis court was built just behind the church.

According to many who grew up in Bath, sometime between 1929 and 1939 a sandbox was placed in a corner of the sanctuary. Sunday school for the children was held in that area. Louise Tankard, whose son Thad Tankard, Jr. was born in

1928, hired T. A. Brooks to build it. Apparently the box remained in that corner and was utilized until at least the late 1960's.

1939-40 The North/South division in the church that had begun before the Civil War was resolved. Reunited, and with the addition of the Methodist Protestant Church, the denominational name changed to THE METHODIST CHURCH. The various women's home and foreign missionary societies of the three uniting churches are joined and became the Woman's Society of Christian Service (WSCS). (The Wesleyan Service Guild remained a separate organization.)

1942-45 Pastor Lewis Edward Sawyer

Pastor Sawyer served the Methodist Church's Bath circuit during WW II. As the war ended, the town saw a decline in population. Some men died in the war and many others found new places to live that had more opportunities. The AME Zion Church on Front Street declined too. Information on the plaque by the historical marker states that, "membership dwindled until the last services in the mid-1940s. The building eventually fell into disrepair and disappeared from the landscape shortly after 1955."

1946-1951 Pastor William Carroll Shaw



As a young man, Reverend Shaw took a correspondence course to become a lawyer. He later became a mathematics teacher and finally he found his calling as a minister. A story that has been handed down in the family states that Rev. Shaw "rode up San Juan Hill" with the not yet President Theodore Roosevelt. Rev. Shaw began preaching in Ohio and Michigan as a Minister of the Reformed Church. He and his family moved to Wilmington where he became an Insurance Salesman and ministered at the Four Oaks Advent Christian Church. While there he joined the Methodist Ministry and the North Carolina Annual Conference placed Rev. Shaw on the Bath Circuit. The rotation included, Asbury, Bath, and Bethany.

Rev. Shaw preached at Asbury at 8:30, Bath at 10 or 11, ate lunch in someone's home at Bath, and evening service (6 or 7 pm) at Bethany. Jay Shaw, a nephew who lived with him, says he thinks Rev. Shaw went to Bayview to preach, but as far as we can tell Bayview never had a Methodist Church.

He was so loved by his congregations at Bath and at Bethany, that when his three-year rotation at the charge was up, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee from Bath went to the District Superintendent and asked for an extension of his term. They did not give another three years, but allowed him to stay year-by-year until 1951. The Conference changed the circuit name from Bath to Bethany. The Bethany circuit was the same as when it was called Bath circuit.

During Pastor Shaw's tenure the Forbes, Fussell, Carr, Gibbs, McKeel, and Tuten families joined the church. Several of these members would step up and take leadership roles.

1952 Pastor A.C. Regan

An August article in the Washington Daily News gives us a snapshot of the church: *The church...has an enrollment of 38 members, and a Sunday school enrollment of 30. The Sunday school is taught by a staff of four under the supervision of Warren Harris. The teachers are: R.B. Forbes, Mrs. Sena Davis, Mrs. Louise Tankard and Mrs. Helen Brooks.* The article confirms the building's completion in 1892, and mentions that its oldest living member in 1952 was Joshua Thomas Skittlethorpe.

At this point it is appropriate to introduce what we know about the Skittlethorpe (alternate spelling: Skittletharp) family.

- A total of 18 Skittlethorpes are listed on the roster. The name first appears in church records in 1874 when J. (Joshua) Baily Skittletharp is listed as a Trustee in the purchase of land for a parsonage. His wife, Mary Elizabeth Craddock Skittletharp, and his five children; William Edward, John M.P. (Johnnie), Joshua Thomas, James Demato and Mary E. also joined.
- The most active and interesting members were Joshua Thomas and his family.
 - Joshua T. lived to be 100 years old, from 1860 to 1960. In his later years it seems that people called him "Pappy" Skittlethorpe. Gin Carson remembers "Pappy" coming to light the stove to heat the church before the service on Sunday mornings. He would be on his way to do the daily job of extinguishing the buoy light at the mouth of Bath Creek. He also rowed out to ignite the light at dusk each day.
 - In 1890, 30 year-old Joshua T. married 25 year-old Mary E. Martin, who was called by her nickname Bettie. They already had two children; Pinkney Blake (b. 1885) and Mary Alice (b. 1888). Three more came along after the wedding; Cassie Ware (b. 1891), Luta Arthell (b. 1896), & Dewey Walter (b. 1898). All of their children are listed on the church rolls.
 - In 1888 Bettie purchased Bath Town Lots 21 & 44 at auction "at the courthouse door" for \$100.00. The house on Lot 21 was once the infamous Buzzard Hotel (now site of The Inn on Bath Creek). J.T. and Bettie raised their family there.

A wonderful article from *Life on the Pamlico* in July of 1994 by Mary Anne Haskell, "Mrs. Louise Tankard, Bath Matriarch" ties one of J.T.'s children to the church. Here is the excerpt:

Life (Mary Anne): What about the Buzzard Hotel. Do you remember that being functional?

Mrs. Tankard: No. It's been a private residence ever since I remember it. The Skittlethorpes lived there and owned it, and they had

a daughter that never married. I remember her because she played the organ in the Methodist Church, and she was there for a long time...."

Research revealed that the person to whom Mrs. Tankard referred is almost certainly Cassie Ware Skittlethorp. She is the only one who lived in the old hotel and never married. Sadly, she died at the age of 31.

We know that Cassie S. was born in 1891 and Louise T. was born in 1906. Louise told Becky Davenport that she learned how to use the pump organ from the church organist at around age 14. That would make Cassie 29 years old at the time. Since Cassie died two years later, Louise most likely started playing for church services regularly at age 16. It is possible that Cassie had also started playing at the church at a young age. Mrs. Tankard played to pump organ/piano/keyboard at church until around 1980.

We do not know where most members of the Skittlethorp family moved. Deed records show that sometime between 1938 and 1942 Joshua T.'s youngest son, Dewey, sold all land he owned in Beaufort County and moved to Virginia. Dewey died in 1958.



The photo here, taken in the church sanctuary, is of the Bible school of 1952. There are well over fifty children in the picture. A circuit would often join all its churches into one summer event. Children were also encouraged to bring their friends from other local denominations.

In 1953 Asbury was dropped and Hebron at Pantego was added to the circuit.

1953-54 Wilford Denny Wise



Born in Manteo in 1916, Wilford grew up there and worked as a butcher in his father's grocery store. In 1941 he married Hulda Ballance, who had recently returned to eastern North Carolina after receiving an RN degree at Capital School of nursing in Washington, DC. They had two children, Denny Claude and Wanda.

As his son recounts, his father "decided to put down his meat cleaver and pick up a Bible." In 1952 the family moved from Manteo to their first appointment, Bath. Young Denny attended Bath School and described the change as being "cast into the fishbowl life of a "preacher's kid (PK)." This same "PK" grew up to become a preacher himself!

Pastor Wise's wife Hulda was a true partner in ministry with her husband. She is described as gregarious and an animated storyteller. She never met a stranger. A 1955 Washington Daily News article illustrates both her vivacity and her inquiring mind. Here are excerpts from that article:

Indian Graveyard Believed Uncovered In Bath By Highway Grading Crew
That may be an old Indian graveyard was uncovered in Historic Bath yesterday afternoon.... A State Highway grading machine...swept across the dirt road portion of Main Street, between St. Thomas Episcopal church (Glebe House) and the old Bonner home. (The Methodist Church and Parsonage sat about halfway down this stretch of road.) ...Mrs. Wilford Wise, wife of the Bath Methodist minister, began digging around curiously and uncovered what seems to be an Indian Grave. There were human bones, teeth, pottery, a peace pipe, and hand made brick similar to the ones used back in the early eighteenth century.

Mrs. Wise has sent these articles to Smithsonian institute for an analysis, and the people of Bath are awaiting word on their discovery....The people of Bath... are determined to search systematically and to prevent curious seekers from digging in the vicinity of the grave.

We have no idea whether the Smithsonian ever replied to the inquiry from the people of Bath.

In 1959 Wilford Denny Wise completed his course of study and joined the North Carolina Conference. He served in numerous Eastern NC churches and five years at Apex UMC. His last appointment was Newport UMC. Reverend Wise died in 1986 and is buried in his hometown of Manteo, North Carolina.

1955 Robert Emory Couch

On September 6, 1955 two deeds were drawn up between P. R Kilby and his wife Retha and Mrs. Florence Waters, Mrs. Senia Davis, and Mrs. C. E. Venters, Trustees of the Methodist Church of Bath. The first deed stated; for \$10.00,

security part of the Lot # 12 in the Town of Bath, on the east side of Water St. adjoining the Methodist Church lot.

The second deed stated; Trustees of the Methodist Church of Bath, deed of trust to P. R. Kilby of Beaufort Co. for \$500.00 for part of the purchase price of property, with the security being part of Lot #12 in the Town of Bath, on the east side of Water St. adjoining the Methodist Church property, which lot was conveyed by said Kilby and wife to the Trustees by deed of this same date. Reg. Sept. 10, 1955.

The house on this lot, called the Hamilton house, had been torn down by Mr. Kilby before the sale. Wood from the building was repurposed into a shed behind Mr. Kilby's house in Bath.

1956-1958 Daniel Edgar Meadows



Pastor Meadows was much loved by the congregation, but the church struggled both in membership and financially. The population of Bath was in decline as people continued to move away after World War II. Still, the church was active in missions and in upkeep of the church building and parsonage. The Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS) provided financial assistance for much of the work.

We have Official Board minutes from Rev. Meadows' time, one of the few records to survive from the past. These minutes reveal several projects, including underpinning the parsonage, making concrete walkways from the church and parsonage doors to the sidewalk out front, replacing the parsonage porch, planting new shrubs around the church, getting dirt hauled in to smooth out the parsonage yard and sowing grass seed in both the church and parsonage lawns.

Much discussion was given to ways to increase membership and raise funds. Signs directing people to the church were erected at the corner of Carteret (NC Hwy 92) and Main streets and the corner of Carteret (NC Hwy 92) and Craven streets. A revival was held each year.

As to finances, the Board authorized the sale of light bulbs and the WSCS held a successful Christmas Bazaar. However, the minutes of January of 1959 stated, "Due to a deficit in the church treasury, [Board] chairman, Warren Harris suggested that a letter giving figures of the finances be sent to each [church] member." The secretary, Louise Tankard, was authorized to compile and send the letters.

1959-1961 Walter Bryan Gregory



In a phone interview with Bryan, pastor Gregory's son, he told us his father liked living in Bath. Young Bryan and his brother both loved to play with Bubs and Celestia Carson, who lived across the street from the church, and all the other children in the neighborhood. Pastor Gregory moved 13 times and preached in 47 churches. One church was even farther east than Bath, Stumpy Point.

1962 Carroll Howell Beale

The year that Pastor Beale was at Bath he had a book published; *The Christ of Galilee*. It is a comprehensive account of the miracles, parables and prayers of Jesus, and the Old Testament prophecies of His coming. It must have been a "work in progress" for many years before this.

1963-1964 Pastor Corbin Cherry was instrumental in helping revive the church by bringing in the local youth. The Cherry family was the first to live in a newly completed parsonage near Bethany Church in Winsteadville. All pastors lived there and served Bath and Bethany churches as long as they were on a charge together. The old parsonage at Bath was rented out to a local family.

In 1964 Bath Circuit was assigned to the Greenville District.

1965 Daniel Edwin Earnhardt

1966 Dan W. Powell supply discondt 6/1967

In 1967, the Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren churches merged and a name changed occurred once more. The UNITED METHODIST CHURCH came to be symbolized by the cross (of Christ) and flame (of the Holy Spirit). The two tongues of a single flame may be understood to represent the union of the two denominations.

1967-1971 James Elias Ellis



James Ellis was a pharmacist for many years before hearing the call to preach. He moved from Cincinnati, Ohio to study at Duke. He was sent to Bath Circuit for his first appointment. The family moved into the parsonage at Winsteadville. However, in October 1971 he told the Bishop he loved to preach and he loved the people in the church, but he could not support a family on \$550 a month. He resigned, moved to Belhaven, opened Pungo River Pharmacy, and returned to his first profession.

We interviewed Jim's widow, Ann Ellis, at Autumnfield Assisted Living Facility in November, 2017. She was 93 years old and sharp as a tack. Ann began with "we had no bathroom on the church grounds, so we would walk down to Louise Tankard's house (about 2 blocks) and use her bathroom." (The former parsonage

beside the Bath church had previously provided restroom facilities. Now it was rented out to a private family.)

She shared one funny memory. During one sermon, Pastor Ellis looked out at the congregation and noticed there were exactly 12 men present. He said, "You 12 men could set the world on fire!" From the pews Mr. Gibbs spoke up and said, "Pastor, we can hardly walk. How are we going to set the world on fire?"

The Lord called Ann to start a Tract Ministry many years ago. She has received many blessings when giving out tracts. After she passed in 2022, her children shared: She passed out hundreds of thousands of tracts and would talk about the love of God. The heart, mind and soul of everyone she met were her treasure.

One of Ann's favorite scriptures is Isaiah 55:11, *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* (KJV)

October 1971 - June 1972



Arthur Gayle Fisher was an interim pastor who completed James Ellis' tenure. During his time he gathered the records he could find and began organizing. When he left church members tried to continue keeping the records up to date. Unfortunately they were often not successful.

The various women's groups in The United Methodist Church merged to form one inclusive organization with the name United Methodist Women (UMW). At first the women of Bath church were reluctant to join the newly structured organization.

They still gathered at church and planned their own missions. One mission was a stamp mission. The ladies sorted and trimmed postage stamps. Then the stamps were sent to a designated location. The stamps were sold to buy Bibles. In turn, the Bibles were sent to the women, and the women mailed them to poor countries that did not have Bibles. This was just one of the missions the women supported.

1973 James Lloyd McCullen SLP

1974-1976 Daniel Clifton Boone RS

The ladies of the church had craft fairs, yard sales, and bake sales to make money for missions. The old parsonage became vacant of renters and discussion about the cost of upkeep turned to plans for tearing the building down.

1977-1982 Oscar Shelton Williams

Pastor Williams was an exceptional preacher and motivator. In the five years he stayed, the church grew from just six to 25-30 regular attendees. James and Joy Henderson were the first family to join the church under Pastor Williams' tenure.

Church member Thaddeus Tankard, Sr. passed away in March of 1977. His son, Thaddeus Jr., presented the church with a very special gift in memoriam; an electric Tower Chime. It chimed each hour, but complaints from Main Street residents resulted in the church setting it to chime at just noon and six pm. In 2012, the machine was replaced with a new, electronic version that put out a little softer chime and then played fifteen minutes of instrumental hymn music. The noon and six pm schedule has continued. People seem to like it.

Pastor Williams revived the practice of preaching three times every Sunday. Sometime after Pastor Shaw's 1950-1951 tenure this demanding schedule of services was reduced. Pastor Williams began the day at Bath at 9:30, preached at Bethany at 11:00 and at Pantego (Hebron) every Sunday evening.

Soon after he arrived, Pastor Williams had a meeting with the women and strongly suggested that they continue their mission work by formally establishing a United Methodist Women's (UMW) group, thus participating with the larger Conference organization. They did this. Nancy Chalker was the group's first President.

The ladies of the church told Pastor Williams they badly needed a bathroom on the church grounds. It was very time-consuming to walk the two blocks to Louise Tankard's house just to go to the bathroom. At this point, the church body began to discuss building a fellowship hall.

Thad Tankard, Jr. and Rufus Forbes started working on ways to grow the church to become a station church (supporting a full-time pastor alone). Through the efforts of these two men combined with the enthusiasm of Pastor Williams a new growth began. (This effort to become a station continued until 2001 when the church became a station under Pastor Ron Estes.)

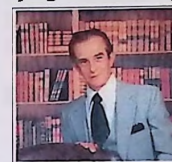
Pastor Williams was very strict about the worship. He put a gold cross in the middle of the Communion Table and said it must never be taken off. Helen Brooks was the Communion steward. Every Sunday she would place the elements on the table. The cups used were gold rimmed glasses. After church she would hand wash and dry all of the Communion parts. Pastor Williams initiated a New Year's Eve Watch Service in addition to the Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve services.

The UMW held several sessions to make items for the Craft and Bake Sale to be held in May of 1983 in front of the old parsonage on Main Street. They also made kits with school supplies for children who could not afford to purchase them. The ladies made Christmas ornaments for the Chrismon tree, and Joy Henderson's third-grade class at Bath School also made decorations, using tin-punching on jar lids.

In 1979, while Pastor Williams was serving Bath UMC, his wife Mildred passed away. After a time he began to court Louise Tankard, who had been widowed two years earlier. She said they could only remain good friends.

Mr. Williams continued to live in the Belhaven area after his retirement from ministry. He died May 26, 1989. His memorial service was held at Bath United Methodist Church and he was buried in the previously mentioned "Williams Family Plot" behind the Glebe House.

1983 Pastor Haywood Lee Martin (AM)



Some United Methodist Women present at a May Craft Sale were; Nancy Chalker, Betty Harris, Mary Rumley, Helen Brooks and Louise Tankard. One of their missions was to support the Walnut Terrace Child Care Center for 2-4 year olds. These children are from underprivileged areas in Harnett County, N C.

1984-1985 Pastor Gordon Talmage Hanford



On March 2, 1984 a groundbreaking ceremony was held at Bath United Methodist Church for a free-standing Fellowship Hall large enough to seat 50 people. It had a kitchen and two bathrooms on the south side. At last the women could stop their "street walking" ways.

Double doors opened in the direction of the church building. Plans indicated that a covered walkway to the back of the church would be added at a later date. The east side of the hall had only a single door entrance.

The congregation contacted families of the people interred in the small graveyard behind the church to have the remains relocated. Directly beside the Fellowship Hall, on the north side, there is a gravestone for: Nancy Davis; wife of Aaron Davis; Born Jan 1, 1818; Died Feb 24, 1894. No one could be found to relocate Mrs. Davis's body. The decision was made to move her headstone and footstone to its present location. We don't know if her body was moved, or if it remains under the fellowship hall.

Pastor Hanford had worked in the brick-making industry for many years before going into ministry. He shared how the red clay dust generated in the process had eaten holes through his stomach lining. On June 25, 1985 Pastor Gordon Talmage Hanford underwent surgery in a desperate attempt to repair the damage. He died on the operating table.

1985-1986 Pastor William Michael Hinson

Pastor Hinson replaced Pastor Hanford. He was very active in planning for the second stage of building on the Fellowship Hall. Negotiations were underway that would change the building committee's previous plans.

Thad Tankard asked permission to negotiate a purchase of a lot on King Street, directly behind the Fellowship Hall. He had been leasing it from owner Mary Archbell. The land was purchased and became the church parking lot. Now the main entrance of the Fellowship Hall would be facing away from the church, and the "covered walkway" to the church could become a fully enclosed hallway instead.

At the end of Pastor Hinson's tenure, a contract was signed to add 16 feet to the north side of the fellowship building for two partitioned class rooms. Double doors would be installed on the east side, and a 9 foot wide hallway would connect the back side of the church building to the back side of the Fellowship Hall.

1986-1990 Pastor Robert Michael Hammond (FLP)



Bath UMC was Pastor Hammond's first pastoral assignment. He had planned to study engineering in college, but felt God's call into ministry was stronger. He was much like Moses upon his call from God because Pastor Hammond also had a severe stutter in his speech. The whole church welcomed him and found him to be extremely brave.

During his appointment the church continued to grow. The Fellowship Hall additions were completed. Purchase of the land for a parking lot was finalized in May of 1987.

Pastor Hammond revived the Homecoming Celebration, and it is still held every year in October. One difference in past versus today's Homecoming—we stay inside with the air conditioning.

The Hammonds had two small children when they arrived and added a new baby boy to their family before his reassignment in 1990. Pastor Hammond returned once or twice as a guest speaker. New advancements in the treatments of stuttering, along with his devotion to God's people has revealed the powerful preacher he was meant to be.

1991-1992 Pastor Warren Sylvester Cash



Everybody loved Pastor Cash. He would be at Bath and preach and then fly down the road to get to his second church, Bethany. He was known for got a lot of speeding tickets going back and forth.

There was a Christmas supper at the parsonage in December. Sylvia Carr was elected UMW President, Louise Tankard Vice President and Lucy Shappley Treasurer.

The UMW sent \$25.00 to the Wesley Methodist Students Foundation. The group

also had a mission saving pop-top tabs from cans for Ronald McDonald House in Greenville.

Rose Cash, Bazelle Womack, Helen Brooks and Connie Albera were also busy doing work for the church. The women participated in a mission called Sheppard's Staff. The purpose is to feed and clothe the needy. Nancy Chalker paid for the food for a Passover meal at the church.

Joy Henderson was elected Chair for flowers for a Sweet Heart Banquet Feb 14, 1992. Arlene Evans was elected to coordinate and oversee the pot luck dinner. Louise Tankard headed up the Worship program. Sylvia, Nancy Chalker, Betty Harris, Arlene Evans worked in making it a wonderful dinner.

Big Plans for the Future 1993-1999

1992-1995 Pastor Jerry Milton Schronce



July 5, 1992 there was a covered dish dinner to welcome the new Pastor and his wife Janet. Bath United Methodist Church celebrated 100 years of worship in the current church building. Jim Henderson was chairperson of the committee that oversaw all the plans. The building's Centennial Celebration date was set for Oct. 24-25 1992.

The 56 members of the church began to plan activities for the 100th Birthday celebration. The Church bell, broken since the 1930's, was repaired and rang for the first time in many years. New carpet was bought for the sanctuary. Louise Tankard and Nancy Chalker led in an effort to gather photos and historical information for the celebration. A four page brochure of the church history was printed. There was a goal set to raise \$1000.00 to paint the church. The goal was met. All were excited to do their part.

EVENTS FOR THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Oct 24 - Candy Howell and Jackie Woolard co-chaired a Harvest Festival for the Children. Bazelle Womack chaired a Bake Sale. Arlene Evans was chair for a Bazaar, which started at 9:00 AM.

Oct 25 - Pastor Schronce conducted the morning service at which Bishop C. P. Minnick, Jr. brought the message. Treva Tankard was the guest soloist and the choir provided special music. More than 100 people attended the service.

During this year the UMW participated in a program *Bibles for the World*. The organization headquarters ships Bibles to UMW and then the UMW pays to have the Bibles sent to other countries. This time they shipped to Peru.

Nov 29, 1992 there was a Soup Supper along with an Advent Wreath making Workshop. Donations at Christmastime included Angel Tree, Foster Children's Project, Operation Santa Clause, and Prison Fellowship.

1995-1999 Pastor Ron Estes
In 1995, a third building project on the fellowship hall was undertaken. Steve Pascal drew up the plans. It included a long hall with two classrooms and a nursery. At the end of the hall were the pastor's study and a clerical office. It is during Pastor Estes' tenure that the church gains Station Church Status. We will see this in Part III of our story.

PART III

OUR LIVING HISTORY CONTINUES
2000 – 2025 TO BE CONTINUED

Missions and Changes 2001 – 2025

2000-2001 Pastor Ron Estes (*continued*)

For a long time pastors and church members had been working to get the church qualified to become a Station church, meaning we no longer share a pastor with any other church. Through the years Pantego, Asbury, Pinetown and Bethany had shared a preacher. In 2000 we were blessed to be named a Station Church, but remained on the charge until 2001.

Once we became a station church there was a need for a parsonage belonging to Bath UMC alone. A modular home on Breezy Shores Rd. was rented. It came up for sale in 2003 and the church purchased it.

Rev. Estes was an evangelist. Church attendance soared. With all the growth, the church purchased a much-needed van. A praise band was organized and Delores Morgan was the director. However, this combination of excellent band and evangelic mode did not appeal to all the church members. Discord arose and Rev Estes left the United Methodist Church. He grew his own church and is doing what he was called to do -- Evangelize.

2002- 2006 Pastor Ray Pearce



Reverend Pearce was good at finding mission work for the church members. In 2002, he initiated the reopening of a thrift store in Belhaven that had been started, and then abandoned, by another church. He named it *The Martha Project*. Volunteers from the church ran the store.

In March of 2003 a food pantry was added through donations from the church and the Food Bank of the Albemarle. Pastor Pearce and Bath UMC were God's faithful servants in helping start and grow a much-needed ministry into an ecumenical community project run by seven churches of different denominations. *Martha's Thrift Store*, as it came to be called, is a thriving 501c3 non-profit organization.

In the fall of 2003, hurricane Isabel caused huge flood damage along the coastal counties. Rev. Pearce worked through the NC Conference Relief Committee, gathered supplies from the Marion Edwards Recovery Center Initiative (MERCi) warehouse, and formed a disaster team from Bath church to help local area churches. The team went to Hobucken UMC in Pamlico County and mopped up, threw out what was ruined, and washed everything in antiseptics. They also went to Swan Quarter's Providence UMC in Hyde County and did the same thing.

During Pastor Ray's time here the first picture Directory of the members of the church was organized. The Methodist Men raised money for missions by cooking and selling delicious fried peanuts. A cook book was compiled by the United Methodist Women. *Southern Cooking in Historic Bath* included recipes from women, men, youth, and friends and family members of the church. In 2008 a second edition included 150 more recipes. It was called *Southern Cooking in Historic Bath: A Second Helping*.

Thanks to many fundraisers and generous donations the parking lot behind the church, purchased in 1985, was finally paved in 2005. The women in the church were very grateful.

BATH TOWNE'S TRI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Bath celebrated its 300th anniversary from March, 2005 through March, 2006. Members of Bath UMC participated in many of the town's events. We also held special celebrations just for church members.

The entire celebration began with the NC General Assembly arriving for a prestigious luncheon. The next event included a formal visit from Lord George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He came from England to participate in a special service at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Townspeople, dressed in costume, acted the part of colonial worshippers.



In April, the Historical Society held a Homes Tour featuring restored, remodeled, and refurbished homes. Bath UMC was featured on the tour, with docents presenting a brief history of the church and its furnishings. The Methodist Women sold picnic lunches to the visitors on the tour. Working in long dresses, ornate sleeves with lace cuffs, and mob caps, everyone gained a new respect for the women of colonial times.

The Elizabeth II, modeled after the sailing vessels sent to Roanoke Island in 1584 and 1587, came to Bath one weekend. The traditional "Blessing of the Fleet" highlighted the event. Boats floating in Bath Creek received heart-felt blessings from several area ministers including Pastor Pearce. The mayor of Bath's sister city, Bath, England, crossed the Atlantic to join us for this memorable historical festivity.

Bath UMC's culminating contribution to the celebration began on Revival Sunday in October when Pastor Pearce, in the persona of John Wesley, rode a horse down Main Street to the church to officiate the morning service. His preaching for the day came from the notes and sermons of John Wesley.

Pastor Pearce nurtured the youth program to include over 20 youth. The group gave several plays at church and took them "on the road" to other churches. *Jesus Christ Superstar* was one of the big hits. The adults, under Pastor Ray's directorship also had plays, the most memorable being a living enactment of Da Vinci's painting "The Last Supper" at Easter. The middle graders and adults performed puppet shows directed by Terri Pearce, the pastor's wife. With the consent of the Staff/Pastor Parish Committee, Pastor Pearce chose to leave early.

2007 Gary Murphree
Mr. Murphree filled in for just under a year.

2008—2010 Pastor Kelli Sorg



Pastor Sorg came to us in Sept. as a first time pastor after graduating from Asbury Theological University in Wilmore, Kentucky. Her husband Dean sold his family heating business to come with her. He was invaluable with his skills in soundboards, projection equipment, websites, and other major areas of church missions.

Pastor Sorg focused on letting the church organize and run committees in the different areas of church business. It was a learning experience that made the church family more confident in taking charge and running the church. Sessions of study and testing taught us to identify our spiritual gifts and how to best use them in the church environment. Bible studies were focused on teaching the members to interpret how things from the past have influenced us in today's culture and the responsibilities in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ by living in his footsteps.

The church sponsored a community Gospel Sing. It was held at a local outdoor theater. Visiting performer David Middendorf, pastor of a "motorcycle ministry", roared in down the center aisle along with some of his congregants. Pastor Sorg sang a solo and also duets with Pam Carson. Both ladies are trained singers and the music was wonderful.

"A Christmas Story", a retelling of Jesus' birth, was held at Jim Preston's barnyard. There were live animals, costumed shopkeepers making and selling items of the past, innkeepers serving foods, and lots of 'townspeople' milling around. It was a narrated tour that stopped at several stations for live reenactment scenes.

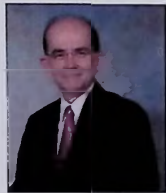
When Pastor Sorg met a young military man visiting Bath, she asked what the church could do for those stationed away from home. His reply was, "These fried peanuts are mighty good". So, the Methodist Men began sending peanuts to military troops!

Jim Caton initiated something he had come across in other communities, Dockside Devotions. With other churches in the area participating, a pastor or lay leader offered fifteen-minute devotions on Tuesday evenings at Bonner Point throughout the summer. The tradition continues today.

Pastor Sorg suggested a fun activity for Christian fellowship. Some members took the suggestion to heart and organized trips in the church van to special events in the community, or just to go out for lunch once a month. It was called "The Rovers—Sittin' on Go". It was a wonderful mission for those who were retired, or those who could reschedule their work to go on these day trips.

Feast and Fellowship began during Pastor Sorg's appointment. The focus was to go outside the walls of the church and invite other churches and other people to join us. We ate pot luck style, conversed with friends, and then had an inspirational presentation.

2011-2016 Rev. William Creech



Pastor Creech called himself a Methacostal (Methodist preacher full of Penacostal fire). Eight months after his assignment to Bath, the pastor found out he had cancer. Several of the men and women would take him to treatments in Greenville and usually went to K & W for fried liver for lunch. Prayers for healing were offered before each visit, and they worked. He went into long-term remission.

When Pastor Creech first got here, the men of the church were building a Praise Pavilion. Because the sides were open, we had several outdoor events for all the people who wanted to come and listen or sing along with us. There was a lot of foot stomping, singing, laughing and just having a good time.

The Methodist Men revived the Valentine Sweetheart Dinners that had not been done since 1993. Every year they would do the cooking and line up a Gospel Quartet to entertain us. One year, with Cody Woolard at piano, some church members led everyone in good old songs from the past.

The electronic carillon (tower chime) system mentioned earlier was purchased through memorial donations in memory of four members: James H. Edwards, Elizabeth Ammons Howell, Theadora Miller and Warren Marshall Page. A little later, the church steeple was refurbished and a 4-5 foot tall white cross was installed at its peak.

The church entered a float in the Bath Christmas Parade in 2014 and won first place! Choir members sang all those Christmas songs everyone loves while sitting on bales of hay and riding in a wagon. Thank goodness a tractor and not a horse pulled the wagon. We had several huge yard sales during Pastor Creech's time. One year the pastor challenged the congregation to raise more money than the previous year. The incentive was that the pastor would take a cream pie in the face. More money was raised, and the pastor was true to his word. David Burbage, Jr. delivered the pie.

Pat Merritt started a hand bell choir in March 2014 and we have played for the church every 2nd Sunday. We have also gone to these assisted living homes: River Trace, Ridgewood, Pantego, and Autumnfield.

Carolyn Hughes, a widow, was the first person to join the church after Pastor Creech was assigned. She became a wonderful leader at the church. She and Joy Henderson did a lot of planning together. When the pastor turned 60, we had a surprise party for him. He had never had a birthday party before. A dear member of the church, Caroline Johnston, passed away in March 28, 2014. Her Husband, David, built a beautiful columbarium on the south side of the church and completed it in 2015. Pastor Creech declared a Dedication Sunday and led a service to honor five members of the church.

Pastor Bill Creech and Carolyn Hughes were married July 18, 2015. He served Bath UMC through June of 2016.

2017-2018 Pastor Christopher Humphreys



Pastor Humphreys grew up in Spring Lake, NC. He was one of a family of six boys. He said that was a rough way to grow up. He served in the navy for twelve years. During that time he resisted any belief in Christianity. But when God got hold of him, he was called to preach.

Unfortunately, Pastor Humphreys arrived during a low point in membership, and thus a time of financial uncertainty. In 2018 the church held a Special Conference and decided to go back to a part-time preacher. Pastor Humphreys did not see how he could stay on.

2019-21 Pastor Robert E. Albritton



Since we lost our Station Church status, Pastor Albritton agreed to be a "3/4 time" preacher. He worked to emphasize the importance of tithing, and we were able to slowly increase our budget projections.

He also helped us focus on missions. The Methodist Women made many visits to nursing homes, donated to a local

women's shelter and the Methodist Home for Children, sent cards and gift baskets to our shut-ins, and managed the annual Homecoming and other church celebrations.

Many people liked Pastor Albritton's way of printing out folded leaflets containing his sermons. He often incorporated group readings of Gospel lessons into his sermons.

Pastor Albritton really enjoyed mentoring seminary students as they neared graduation. One entire summer we had the privilege of seeing the mentoring process in action for William Smith, a student from South Carolina. The next summer we had Patrick Longest, but the Covid Pandemic interfered with our chance to interact with him full-time. Both have since graduated from Duke Divinity School. William is an Associate Pastor in Camden, SC and Patrick went to Law School at UNC-Chapel Hill.

2021-22 Pastor Harry Lee Smith



Pastor Smith has what is often called "The Gift of Gab". He, like so many others, heard the call to use his gifts for God a little later in life. He was able to bring the Bible to life with stories from everyday events, most often his own life.

We were on a Charge with Bethany United Methodist church about 15 miles down the road in Winsteadville.

When the Methodist Church split at the end of 2022, the Bath church remained with the United Methodist Church. Pastor Smith felt God calling him to pull away from the Methodist organization. He took a position at Bath Christian Church.

2023-Present Pastor Karen Pruette



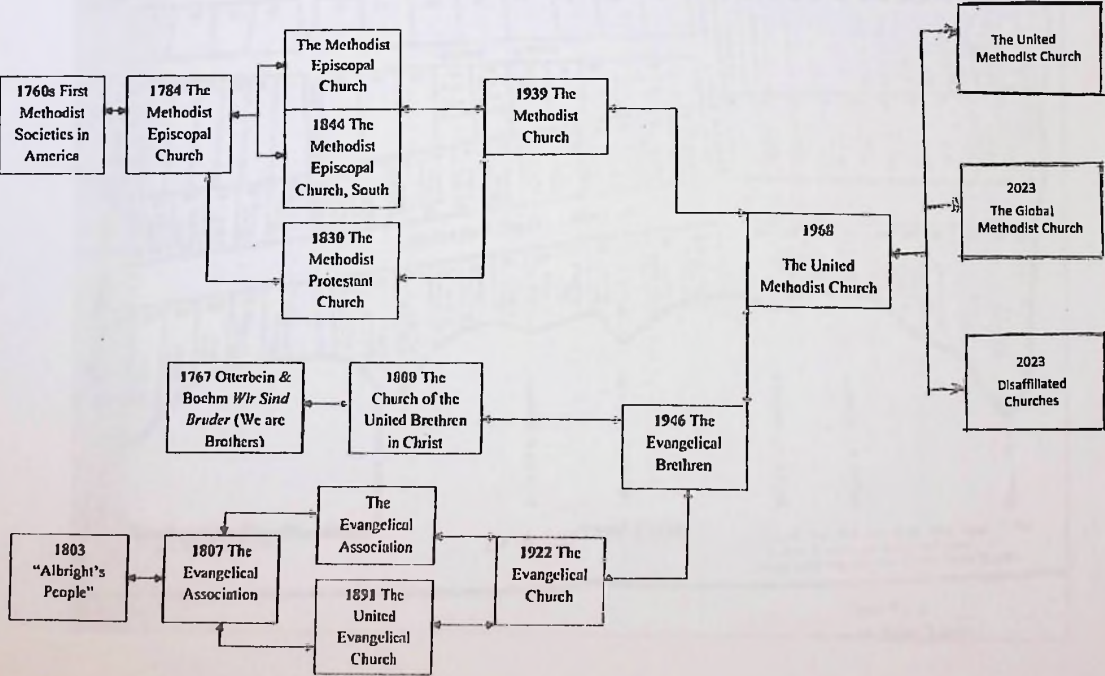
Bethany Church, our Charge partners, disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church and joined The Global Methodist Church. Bath needed to be paired with a different church. Pastor Pruette ministers to churches in Plymouth & Roper in addition to Bath.

APPENDICES

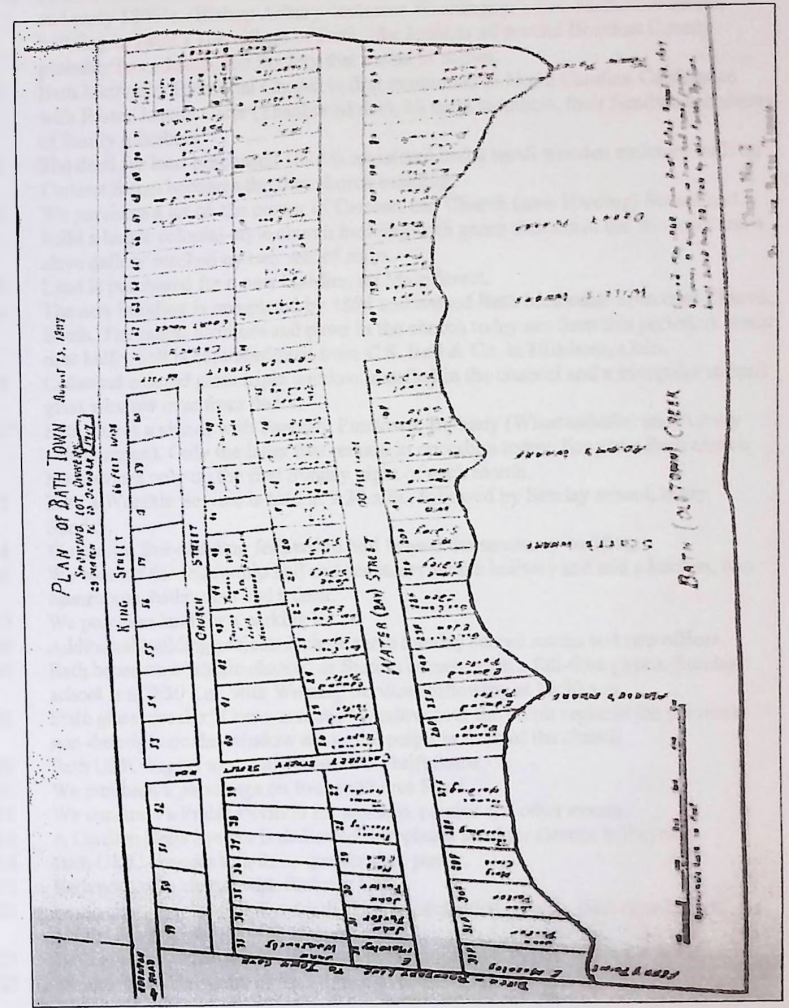
Moving Forward 2026-

To Be Continued

Family Tree of United Methodism



Earliest Map of the Port of Bath, North Carolina



Bath United Methodist Church History

- 1700's Eastern North Carolina experiences a huge growth in Methodism in the late 1700's and early 1800's. (Bishop Asbury dedicates Washington's first Methodist church building in 1802.) The village of Bath, like hamlets all around Beaufort County probably has a Methodist Society that meets in homes.
- 1825 Bath Methodist Episcopal Church is first mentioned in North Carolina Conference with Pastor Joseph Carle (Thacker Muier), 10 male members, their families and slaves of family members.
- 1826 The deed for land purchased 1824 is registered and a small wooden structure built on Carteret Street becomes the first church building.
- 1840 We purchase a lot on the corner of Carteret and Church (now Harding) Streets and build a larger colonial-style church building with green shutters at the windows and a slave gallery reached by two sets of stairs.
- 1892 Land is purchased for a new building on Main Street.
- 1894 The new building is completed by 1894 and named Bath Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The pulpit furniture and pews in the church today are from this period. A brand new belfry bell is commissioned from C.S. Bell & Co. in Hillsboro, Ohio.
- 1899 Cathedral colored glass triple window installed in the chancel and a triangular stained glass window over front doors.
- 1900's Bath shares a circuit with Pantego, Pinetown, Bethany (Winsteadville) and Asbury (Washington). Only the latter two remain in operation today. For years Bath church has services only on the first Sunday night of each month.
- 1977 Bath's Worship Service is held at 9:30 a.m., followed by Sunday school, every Sunday.
- 1984 We erect a free-standing fellowship hall behind the sanctuary building.
- 1985 We connect the fellowship hall and sanctuary with a hallway and add a kitchen, two classrooms, bathrooms and a deck.
- 1987 We purchase land for a parking lot.
- 1995 Additional building projects include three Sunday school rooms and two offices.
- 2001 Bath becomes a "single charge" or Station church, with a full-time pastor. Sunday school is at 9:30 a.m. with Worship Services following at 10:30 a.m.
- 2001 Stain glass circular "Come unto me" window over the pulpit replaces the previous non-descript circular window above the pulpit in front of the church.
- 2002 Bath UMC begins to manage Martha's Thrift Store.
- 2003 We purchase a parsonage on Breezy Shores Road.
- 2013 We construct a Praise Pavilion for worship, picnics and other events.
- 2014 A Carillon Bells System is dedicated. It replaces an older electric bell system.
- 2018 Bath UMC changes to a three-quarter time pastor.
- 2021 Bath goes on a charge with Bethany UMC.
- 2022 Some churches disaffiliate with the United Methodist Church. Bath remains with the United Methodists.
- 2023 Bath goes on a charge with churches in Plymouth and Roper.
- 2025 We celebrate 200 years of the Methodist church in Bath.

Church Land Transactions

Book 17 Page 286

Purchase

1826 - portion of Lot 39 (for 1st Church Bldg.) sold by Nancy Cogdele to:William Smaw
Abishai Pritchett
Thomas VinesJames Corpew
Wallace Nelsob
Edmund WindleyAbraham Adams
John Williams
Thomas A. Pritchett**Book 21 Page 161**

Purchase

1841 - portion of Lot 40 (for 2nd Church Bldg.) sold by William M. Marsh & Samuel B. Marsh to:James Avent
George N. Gregory
Levin B. LongThomas Windley
Robert A. EbornJohn Tyler
John Long**Book 39 Page 22**

Purchase

1874 - Lot 33(to build a parsonage) sold by W. H. & Mary Orman to:

Ashley Woolard

J. Bailey Skittletharp

Alfred W Satterthwait

Book 78 Page 491

Sale

1891 - ¼ acre part of Lot 40 (no longer needed) sold by W. H. Ormond & J. T. Nicholson to:

Public School Committee of District #10, white, Bath Township

Book 81 Page 447

Purchase

1892 - Lot 11 (for 3rd Church Bldg.) sold by Maud M. Gebbs (Gibbs) to:

W. H. Ormond

B.J. Draper

J. T. Nicholson

Book 455 Page 1 & 89

Purchase

1955 - a two-part transaction for a part of Lot 12 sold by P.R. & Retha Kilby to:

Florence Waters

Senia Davis

Mrs. C.E. Venters

Book 880 Page 770

Purchase

1987 - Land for parking lot (originally Lots 64 & 65) sold by Mary B. Archbell to:

Thad E. Tankard, Jr.
James N. Richardson

Warren W. Harris

Helen W. Brooks

Book 1320 Page 856

Purchase

2003 - Land & house for parsonage sold by Elwood R. Jefferson & Sandra E. Forbes to:

D.D. Winstead, Jr.
Steve PaschallWarren Page
Joy Henderson

R. David Burbage, Sr.

Ministers at Bath United Methodist Church recorded in the

Minutes of the Annual Conference

Methodist Episcopal Church (1784-1839)	1901	J. E. Bristowe
1825 Joseph Carle	1904-05	To be supplied (William Franklin Galloway)
1826 William J. Waller	1905-07	James Marion Lowder
Methodist Protestant Church (1828-1839- A few joined in NC)	1908-09	Francis Ernest Dixon
1827 John Kerr	1910-12	James Buchanan Bridgers
1828 Abraham Harrell	1913	Bridgers died July 15 1913
1829 Leroy M Lee		Carney Eugene Durham replaced him
1830 George Gregory (P) Wilson Barclift	1914-16	John J. Lewis
1831 Phillip Anderson	1917	Robert Lee Carroway
1832 George N. Gregory	1918	William Jordan Covington
1833 Thales McDonald	1919-20	Lloyd Crawley Brothers
1834 Thomas R Brame (Supermummeray)	1921-22	Robert Johnson Lough
1835 James M Boatright	1923	Thomas Stanley Coble
1836 S. T. Moorman	1924	To be supplied (C.J. Edwards)
1837 Robert Pibb	1925-26	William Norman Vaughan
1838 James E Joyner	First time journal carries list of individual churches on circuit (Asbury, Bath, Bethany, Pinetown)	
1839 Henry Gray	1927-30	James William Sneedden (Ware's added '29
Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1840-67)	1931	John Calvin Harmon
1840 Richard I. Wynn	1932	Elijah Leroy Stack
1841 Washington S. Chaffin	1933-34	Francis Ernest Dixon
1842 William Holmes	1935-38	To be supplied (John Dee Robinson)
1843 John T. Brame	The Methodist Church (1940-1967)	
1844 John T Brame	1939	Edward Norman Harrison
1845-46 D. W. Doub	1940-41	Ernest Raymond Bromley (let during yr. O.C
1847 Lafayette W. Martin	Haas filled out the year	
1848 Richard R. Dunkley	1942-45	Lewis Edward Sawyer
1849 To be supplied	1946-51	William Carroll Shaw
1850 Marble N. Taylor	1952	Austin Cleo Regan
1851 William M. Walsh	1953-54	Wilford Denny Wise
1852 To be supplied	1955	Robert Emory Couch (PM)
1853 To be supplied (George W. Farrabee)	1956-58	Daniel Edgar Meadows
1854 Samuel B. Dozier	1959-61	Walter Bryan Gregory
1855-57 To be supplied (Samuel Robertson)	1962	Carroll Howell Beale
1858-59 Washington D. Meacham	1963-64	Corbin Lee Cherry
1860-61 William H. Moore	1965	Daniel Edwin Earnhardt
1862-63 To be supplied	1966	Dan W. Powell supply discontinued 6/1967
1864-65 Due to Civil War, Bath had no delegates to Annual Conference	United Methodist Church (1968-	
1866-67 To be supplied	1967-71	James Elias Ellis 10/1/'71 discontinued
1868 To be supplied (James Mahoney)	1972	(2/1)-June 72 Arthur Gayle Fisher
1869-70 Robert P. Bibb	1973	James Lloyd McCullen (SLP)
1871 H. F. Wiley	1974-76	Daniel Clifton Boone (RS)
1872-74 To be supplied (Leonidas L. Nash)	1977-82	Oscar Shelton Williams (RS)
1875 To be supplied	1983	Haywood Lee Martin (AM)
1876-77 James L. Lumley	1984-5	Gordon Talmage Hanford(AM) d. 6/25/'85
1878-79 E. D. Hoover	1985	(12-1)-86 William Michael Hinson (IS)
1880 Thomas P. Bonner	1986-90	Robert Michael Hammond (FLP)
1881-82 J. F. Washburn	1991	Warren Sylvester Cash
1883 James Mahoney	1992-94	Jerry Milton Schronce
1884-86 Nathan Hall Guyton- Supply	1995-02	Ronald Estes
1887 Daniel Reid	2002-06	Raymond Pearce
1890 W. Y. Everton	2007	Gary Murphree
Bath is not mentioned again until 1902.	2008-10	Kelli Sorg
Bath was on the Pantego charge	2011- 16	William Creech
1891 To be supplied (William F Jones)	2017-18	Christopher Humphreys
1892-93 Lemon H. Joyner, Jr.	2019-21	Robert E. Albritton
1894 W. E. Hocutt	2021-22	Harry Lee Smith
1895-96 Yancey Ellerbe Wright	Bath remains in the United Methodist Church	
1997-98 Samuel Leffers	2023-	Karen Pruette
1899-1900 D.B. Parker		

Starred items were passed
along or are no longer in use.

MEMORIALS FOR BATH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Some dates are date-of-death
from Obituaries.

DATE	ITEM(S)	HONOREE(S)	GIVEN BY
*1892	Pump Organ	Newly Built Church	Moved from 1840 Church
1892	Pulpit Furniture & Pews	Newly Built Church	Purchased by Congregation
1892	Round Stained Glass Window at back of Nave	Newly Built Church	Purchased by Congregation
1893	Belfry Bell	Newly Built Church	Purchased by Congregation
1960	Brass Cross for Communion Table	Claude E. Venters	Friends
1962	Paraments for Pulpit	Gift to the Church	William & Mary Rumley
1964	Padded Cushion for Altar Rail	Corbin Cherry (Former Pastor)	Grateful Parishioners
*1965	Brass Cross for Communion Table	Ed & Florence Waters	Friends
1975	Two Pink Glass Windows in Chancelry	Hermond V. Gibbs	Friends
*1977	Tower Chimes	Thaddeus Earl Tankard, Sr.	Thaddeus E. Tankard, Jr.
*1979	Two Brass Flower Urns	Mildred Evans Williams	Annie Temple (Sister)
1980	US Flag and base	William Rumley	Friends
1980	Christian Flag and base	William Rumley	Mary Elizabeth Rumley
*1980	Piano	Mildred Evans Williams	Her Family
*1981	Front Doors of the Church	Senia Frazier Davis	Friends
1981	Large Cross behind Pulpit	Roy Campbell Brooks, Sr	Family & Friends
1981	Two Brass Collection Plates	Mildred Evans Williams	Her Family
1982	New Pulpit Bible	Louise Tankard (for her continuing faithful service)	Oscar Williams (her Pastor)
1983	Hand-crafted Display Cabinet- for old Communion Set and Prayer Book	Gift to the Church	Warren Harris (the Woodworker)
1983	Candle Snuffer	Gift to the Church	Lois Respass
1983	Painting of Christ in Vestibule	Gift to the Church	Harriet Kirk (the Artist)
1985	Communion Table	Pearl S. Gibbs	Friends
*1987	Flame & Cross Outdoor Ornament	R. B. Forbes	Friends
1987	Oak Room-divider/Screen	Gift to the Church	Warren & Irene Page
1988	Paraments for Communion Table & Pulpit	W. Robert (Bob) Lewis	Friends
1989	Baptismal Stand	Mary Elizabeth Rumley	Her Family

DATE	ITEM(S)	HONOREE(S)	GIVEN BY
1989	Bulletin Board	Oscar Williams (Late Pastor)	Sunday School Class
1989	Handcrafted Walnut Flower Stand	Oscar Williams (Late Pastor)	Warren Harris & Vernon Howell
1995	New Handrails for Front Steps	Therese Hoogendoorn	Friends
1996	Flame & Cross Stained Glass Over Front Door	Helen F. Waters Brooks	Helen F. Brooks Richardson
1997	Sound System	Betty Marsh; James Ray Cox; Sheri G. Cox	Jack Marsh Family; Patricia Cox & James R. Cox, Jr.
1990	35 Methodist Hymnals	Louise Tankard	Family & Friends
1993	10 Methodist Hymnals	Terese (& Garrit) Hoogandoorn	Family, Friends, & Memorial Fund
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	Gertrude Sparrow	Family
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	Dr. & Mrs. J.T. McRae	Family
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	James H. Schronce	Jerry M. Schronce, son
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	Virginia Wilson	Family
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	Lillian Turnage	Family
1992	1 Methodist Hymnal	Rev. Oscar Williams	Friends
	Oil Painting of Jesus Opening the Curtain	Gift to the Church	Harriet Kirk (the Artist)
	Organ Box & Bench	Gift to the Church	Kevin Everett (woodworker)
	Acolyte Candle Lighter	Gift to the Church	A Friend
2001	"Come to Me" Stained Glass Behind Pulpit	Louise Williams Tankard	Thaddeus E. Tankard, Jr.
2001	Large Blue & Gold Banner depicting the Church	Gift to the Church	Vernon Howell & Delores Morgan (the Crafter)
2003	Painting of the Church in the Vestibule	Warren Harris	Church Family (B Jones, artist)
1970-2009	Multiple Hand-crafted Wall Banners	George Evans	Arlene Evans (the Crafter)
2009	Lights for Large Cross behind Pulpit	Gift to the Church	Dean Sorg
2009	Padded Prayer Bench	James Edwards	Mary Edwards
2009	Round Table (at back of nave)	James Edwards	Mary Edwards
2009	Rectangular Table (in Vestibule)	James Edwards	Mary Edwards
2010	Chalk Drawing of Woman at the Tomb	Gift to the Church	Ken Lumsden (the Artist)
2010	Porcelain Figurine of the Last Supper	James Edwards	Mary Edwards
2011	Large Food Warmer & Cooking Utensils	James Edwards	Mary Edwards
2014	Two large Flower Urns	Jasper & Janet Nolan	Iris Nolan

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