

THE HISTORY OF
BETHANY METHODIST CHURCH
STEDMAN, NORTH CAROLINA

THE BEGINNINGS OF BETHANY CHURCH GO BACK BEYOND WRITTEN RECORD. IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF "CAMP GROUND MEETINGS," AFTER THE CROPS WERE LAID BY, THAT PEOPLE FROM FAR AND NEAR WOULD GATHER UNDER THE OAKS AT WHAT IS NOW THE BETHANY CHURCH SITE. FOR MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS PEOPLE HAVE COME TO THIS SPOT FOR WORSHIP. IN THE OLD DAYS THE "BIG MEETING" WAS THE HIGH SPOT OF THE YEAR; THE FOLKS CAME IN THEIR COVERED WAGONS, PITCHED THEIR TENTS, AND SETTLED DOWN FOR TWO GLORIOUS WEEKS. THE MEN AND WOMEN CAUGHT UP WITH THE NEWS OF THE YEAR, WHILE THE BOYS AND GIRLS DELIGHTED IN THE CRAWFISH OF THE NEARBY CREEK. BUT, CENTRAL AND ABOVE ALL, WAS THE DEEP YEARNING TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. BRUSH HARBOR, CURDE ALTAR, IMPASSIONED PREACHING, AND HEARTFELT SINGING; THESE ARE THE CLEAR KEYNOTES THAT HAVE STOOD IN THE MEMORIES OF HUNDREDS OF SOULS THAT MET THEIR SAVIOUR FACE TO FACE HERE IN THIS HALLOWED PLACE.

IT WAS IN AUGUST, 1848, FOLLOWING A PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL MEETING, THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE COMMUNITY DECIDED TO ORGANIZE A CHURCH WHICH WAS NAMED "CAMP GROUND." TWO ACRES OF BEAUTIFULLY WOODED PROPERTY WERE GIVEN BY RAEFORD AUTRY AND DANIEL GEDDIE. THE FINEST OF LONGLEAF PINE WAS DONATED FOR THE BUILDING AND SO SKILLFUL WAS THE CONSTRUCTION THAT THE ORIGINAL SANCTUARY STANDS TODAY IN VERY GOOD CONDITION, WITH ONLY A MINOR MODIFICATION IN 1870. IN THAT YEAR, THE NAME WAS CHANGED TO "BETHANY." WITHOUT A CHANGE IN SCHEDULE OF SERVICES, THE SECOND SUNDAY MORNING OF EACH MONTH HAS SEEN THE DOORS OF BETHANY OPENED AT 11:00 O'CLOCK FOR A SERVICE OF WORSHIP.

THE EARLIEST CHURCH RECORD NOW ON HAND GOES BACK TO THE YEAR 1883 WHEN REV. C. M. GENTRY BECAME THE PASTOR. HE WAS FOLLOWED BY: J. L. KEENE, P. A. WHITE, PHILLIP GREENING, D. A. FUTRELL, G. W. STARLING, G. O. GREEN, A. D. BETTS, L. H. JOYNER, N. H. MCDONALD, J. D. PEGRAM, F. E. DIXON, W. C. BROWN, J. L. MCNEER, H. M. DARGON, J. A. THORPE, R. F. TAYLOR, E. C. SELLS, W. A. PILAND, S. S. ELLINGTON, E. W. HURST, C. H. CAVINESS, H. R. ASHMORE, R. E. ATKINSON, I. J. STRAWBRIDGE, W. F. ELLIOTT, W. H. BRADY, BROOKS PATTEN, C. B. LONG, J. W. DIMMETTE, A. D. BYRD JR. H. L. HARRELL, J. R. REGAN, F. J. DUPLISSEY, AND W. HOYT CHEEK, THE PRESENT PASTOR.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE BEEN: REV. J. D. BUNDY, R. H. WILLIS, L. B. JONES, J. H. SHORE, W. C. MARTIN, W. A. CADE, J. C. WOOTEN, E. D. EARNHARDT, W. V. MCRAE, H. C. SMITH, W. L. CLEGG, W. C. BALL, O. L. HATHAWAY, M. C. DUNN, B. L. DAVIDSON AND M. W. LAWRENCE, THE PRESENT DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT.

THE PRESENT CONGREGATION IS MADE UP OF FORTY-NINE CHURCH MEMBERS. WE HAVE WORSHIP SERVICES EACH SECOND SUNDAY MORNING AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK AND EACH FOURTH SUNDAY AT SIX-THIRTY P. M.; AND BIBLE STUDY EACH FIRST SUNDAY AT SIX-THIRTY P. M. SUNDAY SCHOOL CONTINUES TODAY WITH FOUR CLASSES WITH AN ENROLLMENT OF THIRTY-THREE MEMBERS.

A LADIES AID SOCIETY WAS ORGANIZED ON JANUARY 19, 1930, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF REV. C. H. CAVINESS, THEN PASTOR OF THE CHURCH. ELEVEN MEMBERS FORMED THE ORIGINAL ROLL. IN THE YEAR 1956, WITH ENCOURAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP FROM MRS. DORTHY HARRELL, WIFE OF REV. HAYWOOD L. HARRELL, PASTOR, THE MEMBERS BEGAN DISCUSSING THE RE-NAMING OR CHANGING OVER OF THE LADIES AID SOCIETY TO THE WOMAN'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. ON JUNE 19, 1956 THE FIRST MEETING AS THE WOMANS SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE WAS HELD IN THE HOME OF MRS. ADDIE MATTHEWS. THERE ARE SIXTEEN MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY AT PRESENT.

THE HOMECOMINGS WHICH WE HAVE ENJOYED SINCE THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IN 1948 ARE AS FOLLOWS: SEPTEMBER 12, 1954, A. D. BYRD JR. PASTOR; SEPTEMBER 11, 1955, H. L. HARRELL, PASTOR; SEPTEMBER 9, 1956, H. L. HARRELL, PASTOR; OCTOBER 29, 1961, F. J. DUPLISSEY, PASTOR; SEPTEMBER 9, 1962, F. J. DUPLISSEY PASTOR; (FIRST DAY IN THE NEW BUILDING); NOVEMBER 10, 1963 F. J. DUPLISSEY, PASTOR; OCTOBER 18, 1964 F. J. DUPLISSEY, PASTOR; (HOMECOMING AND DAY OF DEDICATION OF THE NEW CHURCH); OCTOBER 10, 1965, W. HOYT CHEEK, PASTOR.

OUR BUILDING FUND ORIGINATED ONE SPRING MORNING IN 1954 DURING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL HOUR WHEN WE DISCUSSED HAVING A HOMECOMING AND DECIDED TO SAVE UP OUR MONEY TO TRY TO SEE HOW WE COULD BEAUTIFY OUR LITTLE WHITE CHURCH FOR THE OCCASSION. LITTLE DID WE REALIZE AT THAT TIME THAT AS A RESULT OF THIS IDEA, OUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THIS PURPOSE WOULD LATER BE CALLED A BUILDING FUND; AND THAT ONE DAY WE WOULD ENJOY A LOVELY NEW CHURCH LIKE THIS. HOWEVER, ON MARCH 11, 1962 A GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY FOR OUR NEW CHURCH WAS LED BY REV. M. C. DUNN, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, (NOW DECEASED) ASSISTED BY OUR PASTOR, REV. F. J. DUPLISSEY; AND ON THE FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER 9, 1962, WE ENTERED OUR NEW BUILDING FOR THE FIRST TIME; WITH OUR SERVICE OF CONSECRATION LED BY REV. A. J. HOBBS, DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD OF MISSIONS (DURING REV. M. C. DUNN'S ABSENCE), ALSO ASSISTED BY OUR PASTOR, F. J. DUPLISSEY. WHAT A GREAT DAY FOR THE PEOPLE OF BETHANY, BUT, MAY WE PAUSE AND HUMBLY SAY "THANK YOU," FIRST TO GOD; AND FOR THE WORK AND FAITH OF OUR FOREFATHERS WHO HAVE PASSED ON; TO THE PEOPLE OF BETHANY CHURCH AND COMMUNITY; TO OUR PASTOR AND HIS FAMILY; TO THE BOARD OF MISSIONS; TO MECCO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, AND TO EACH AND EVERY ONE WHO HAD EVEN A SMALL PART IN HELPING OUR DREAMS TO BECOME A REALITY.

IT WAS ON OCTOBER 18, 1964 THAT WE WERE MOST GRATEFUL TO HAVE BISHOP PAUL N. GARBER TO COME AND LEAD IN THE DEDICATION SERVICES OF OUR NEW CHURCH; ASSISTED BY OUR DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, M. W. LAWRENCE AND OUR PASTOR F. J. DUPLISSEY.

MAY WE NEVER CEASE TO BE THANKFUL FOR OUR MANY BLESSINGS AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO RICHLY BLESS EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS; IN WHATEVER WAY IT MAY HAVE BEEN PERFORMED; WHETHER THROUGH PRAYER, WORK, AND GIVING OF GIFTS, (FOR THEY HAVE BEEN MANY, AND HAVE BEEN DEEPLY APPRECIATED); OR FOR ANY OTHER WAY; FOR, AS A RESULT, TODAY, BETHANY CHURCH STANDS ON THE THRESHOLD OF A PERIOD OF EVER INCREASING MINISTRY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM. WHILE THRILLED IN HUMBLE GRATITUDE FOR THE GLORY OF HER PAST SERVICE, LET US VIEW THE FUTURE WITH AN ENLARGED VISION OF WHAT BETHANY CHURCH MIGHT STILL BECOME; AND TOGETHER PRESS ON TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

ON OCTOBER 10, 1965, WITH W. HOYT CHEEK AS PASTOR, WE ENJOYED ANOTHER WONDERFUL HOMECOMING SERVICE AT BETHANY CHURCH. THE FOLLOWING WEEK, WE WERE MOST FORTUNATE IN HAVING REV. CARL R. CALLAWAY, OF ERWIN, TO BRING THE GOSPEL MESSAGES DURING OUR REVIVAL. WE HAD A GREAT TIME TOGETHER, AND AN ADDITION OF TWO PERSONS TO OUR CHURCH ROLL; OF WHICH WE ARE INDEED GRATEFUL.

10/19/65

Church History Committee :

Miss Patsy Royal

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