

History  
of  
BETHEL METHODIST CHURCH  
compiled by  
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1960

## BETHEL METHODIST CHURCH IN SOUTH ALAMANCE COUNTY

The exact date of the organization of Bethel Church is unknown, but we are told that Rev. Alexander Albright preached the first sermon ever delivered at what is now Bethel. This was before any building was provided. In giving this sermon he stood on a large rock in a grove a few hundred yards south of the present church.

From the minutes of Orange Circuit, we find that at Salem on April 30, 1836, the following plan of preaching places was adopted:

First Sunday-----Salem  
Monday-----Chestnut Ridge  
Tuesday----Rehoboth  
Wednesday----rest  
Thursday----rest  
Friday-----Fogleman School House (now Friendship)  
Saturday-----rest

Second Sunday-----Mt. Hermon  
Monday-----rest  
Tuesday-----rest  
Wednesday----Mt. Pleasant School House  
Thursday----Siler City  
Friday-----Tabernacle  
Saturday-----rest

Third Sunday-----Shilow  
Monday-----Bethel  
Tuesday-----Mountain School House  
Wednesday---- ? (unable to read it)  
Thursday----Grays Chapel  
Friday-----rest  
Saturday----- ? (unable to read it)

Fourth Sunday-----Piney Grove  
Monday-----Hickory Grove  
Tuesday-----Foust's Old House  
Wednesday----Lindley's Camp Ground  
Thursday----Cook's  
Friday-----D. Foust's  
Saturday-----rest

As this is the earliest recorded date that we have been able to find, we consider that Bethel Church was established in 1836, although it probably was earlier than that.

In 1936, under the pastorate of Rev. Hubert L. Isley, Bethel Church celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary.

Before Bethel Church was built, services were held in an old log dwelling house known as the Bobbet House, which stood in the field just south of the present church.

In 1841, Mary Foust, widow of Peter Foust, Sr. and mother of Peter, Jr., John, Sr., and Daniel, deeded to the trustees of Bethel Church, John Foust, Sr., William McPherson, Sr. and William Albright, four and one one-hundredth acres and sixteen poles more or less of land on which to erect a Methodist Protestant Church. The church doors, however, were to be open to any and all denominations. Any person with due authority from the North Carolina Conference, or other means, was to have the right to hold services in the church, which was built in 1842. It stood just about where Rev. G. W. Holmes and Gray McPherson burial plots are

now located.

The church was a long wooden building with the pulpit in the north side and the doors in the east, south, and west. The windows were small and the panes of glass were very small. The benches had backs of two slats. Colored people sat in the east end.

As the church was small and could not accommodate the large number of people who attended the camp meetings, which were held every fall, a large wooden arbor was built just south of the church and services were held under the arbor. The pulpit was in the south side of the arbor. Seats were made by putting down logs and then laying slabs or planks across them. Wheat straw was put on the dirt floor, especially thick about the alter and the mourner's bench.

Many families of the community built tents around the arbor and camped there during the meetings. These buildings were planked up and down and consisted of two rooms in which the people cooked their meals and slept. The beds were curtained off with homespun bedspreads. Some of the people camped in their covered wagons. Beds were fixed in the church for the preachers to sleep on. There were often five or six preachers who would cry, "AMEN", during the services, and many of the people would shout and praise the Lord. Among the people who had wooden tents there, we mention a few. On the east side of the arbor: David Moore, George Stockard, John Foust, Uncle William Foust and son, John A. Foust; on the south, Sabert Thompson and Joshua Perry; and on the west, Thomas Thompson and Dennis Wood. Some member of the family would go home to care for the stock. For instance, in the John Foust family Arlendo, who was not married would take some of the men home with him and sleep there.

Prayer meeting was held in the church on the first Sunday in each month until Bethel became a station church in 1955.

No list of the charter members of Bethel church is available.

Some of the earliest official members recorded are: William Shaw, John Crawford, Thomas Thompson, William McPherson, John Foust. John Stout, William McPherson, Jr., James Griffin, William Workman, Simpson Boggs, Hiram Johnson, William Johnson, William Albright, William Stafford, Robert Shaw, Oliver McPherson. A little later were these officers: William Foust, Berry Davidson, John Fowler, Thomas Stafford, George Stafford, William Enoch McPherson and John Shaw.

The earliest Membership roll that we have recorded is in 1858 and gives only the names of the male members. We are placing here the names of their wives and the dates to help identify them.

#### Male members of Bethel Church in 1858

John Foust, Sr.....1789-1860	(Susan Hornaday)	1795-1873
William Albright.....1791-1871	(1. Polly Wood)	-1819
	(2. Eleanor Stockard)	1802-
Henry Stout.....-1893	(Susan)	
William McPherson, Sr...1787-1871	(Sarah Thomas)	1788-1854
William McPherson, Fr...1821-1879	(1. Caroline Brower)	1824-1869
	(2. Celia Hill)	1843-1910
Oliver McPherson.....1823-1902	(1. Deborah Newlin)	1825-1851
	(2. Malinda Lambe)	1824-;898

Wm. Enoch McPherson.....	1809-1864	(Nancy Dark)	1811-1868
Eli McPherson.....		(never married)	
J. Ingram McPherson.....	1832-1900	(1. Lucinda York) (2. Luena Edwards)	
John <sup>ay</sup> Cresford.....	1801-1874	Never married	
Simpson Boggs			
Jacob Boggs			
Ealaam McVey.....		(Jemima Moon)	
William Johnson			
Hiram Johnson			
Isaac Johnson			
James Griffin.....	1822-1897	(1. Nancy Pickard) (2. Nancy Moon)	1823-1880
William Stafford.....	1824-1902	(1. Malinda Albright) (2. Rebecca Branson) (3. Susan Keitzel)	1823-1859 1833-1883 1860-1936
John N. Stafford.....	1827-1855		
Warner Stafford.....	-1873	(Martha Pugh)	
Lewis Stafford.....	-1865	(Mary Ann Shaw)	1834-1905
George Stafford.....	1794-1865	(Mary Hornaday)	1797-1888
Balaam Stafford.....	1822-1907	(Polly Amick)	1819-1896
Johathan Workman			
William Workman.....		(Mary Stout)	
William Shaw			
Robert Shaw.....	1827-1901	(1. Elizabeth Albright) (2. Cornelia Albright)	1829-1878 1843-1932
John Shaw.....	1832-1907	(Elizabeth May)	1831-1908
William Foust.....	1823-1882	(Sallie Albright)	1824-1915
John Foust, Jr.....	1828-1907	(Angeline Snipes)	1832-1908
Berry Davidson			
Will Davidson			
Murchison Davidson			
William C. Ray			
Green C. Ray			
William Brewer			
William H. Pickard			
James Taylor			
Manly Turner.....		(Nancy May)	
Lewis Albright			
John Albright.....	1827-1906	(Polly Wright)	-1912
Thomas Thompson.....	1810-1905	(Edna Morton)	1810-1891
Abjicon Lindsey		(Mary Ann Foushes)	
Milton Allen			
Frances Stout			
H. C. Stout			
Pleasant York.....	1831-		
Hanse Williams			
Gaston Moon			
John Braxton.....	1831-1895	(1. Nancy G. Pugh..... (2. Sarah Caroline..... Pugh)	1831-1885) 1841-1906
Number of male members.....	52		
Number of females.....	100		
Number of blacks.....	11		
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Total.....	163		

In 1861 Orange circuit was divided and Alamance circuit was formed. Appointments for Sabbath preaching were to be at Mt. Hermon, Bethel, Rock Creek and Concord and week-day appointments left discretionary with the pastor for the following places: Fogleran's Camp Ground, Center, Salem, Tabernacle, Friendship, New Union and Sapling Ridge.

In 1879 about an acre of land, joining the old plot on the north, was bought from Robert Shaw and a new church was built with money willed to the church by John Crawford; then the old church was used for a school house.

The following persons helped build the church: John and Columbus Coble, Patterson Pickett and his son Filmore Pickett, Dennis Wood, Bob Shaw, John A. Foust, Arlando Foust, Jim McVey, and Frank Pugh. Ed Benson was the painter.

The new church building consisted of only one room, the present sanctuary, which was built in 1879 during the pastorate of Rev. W. W. Amick. It was a great day for the community when the church was dedicated. Rev. Cicero F. Harris, a very large man, who preached the dedication sermon was told at the door that he could not get in the church because it was so crowded. He replied, "Well, I'll try". One of the hymns used in this service was "I Love Thy Church, O God". Mrs Will Holman Played the organ. Incidentally, this new organ had been brought there in a two-horse wagon belonging to John Foust. When it was unloaded and taken inside the church door, John A. Foust began playing it and it frightened the horses so that they ran all the way home.

#### Pastors of the old church

We have no complete list of the pastors of the old church. From the minutes of the Quarterly Conferences we find the names of the following preachers present at the meetings of the Quarterly Conferences, but they may not all have been pastors of Bethel church, for we know that several of them served as president of the annual conference:

Rev. Alexander Albright  
 Rev. Alson Gray  
 Rev. John Hinshaw  
 Rev. A. W. Linberry  
 Rev. John W. Heath was pastor in 1866 and again in 1869-70  
 Rev. John Martin  
 Rev. C. F. Harris  
 Rev. Thomas L. Carter  
 Rev. H. T. Weatherly  
 Rev. Robert R. Prather  
 Rev. Daniel W. Thompson  
 Rev. William J. Ogburn  
 Rev. John C. Forbes  
 Rev. James Gibbs Steckard  
 Rev. T. H. Pogram  
 Rev. William W. Amick was pastor in 1873-75  
 Rev. William C. Kennett was pastor in 1876-77

#### Pastors of the new Church

1878-79 Rev. William W. Amick  
 1880-82 " Cicero F. Harris  
 1883 " John Henry Totten  
 1883 " George Washington Bowman

1885-86	Rev.	John N. Garrett	1961-62	Rev.	Kenneth E. Halcott
1887-90	"	William W. Amick	1963-64	"	J. J. Williams
1891-92	"	John N. Garrett	1965-66	"	W. T. Clarke
1893-94	"	B. A. Highfill	1967	"	Melvin B. Doudy
1895	"	William F. Ashburn	1968-69	"	Ernie H. Houser
1896-99	"	William F. McDowell	1970-	"	Donald F. Gunn
1900-01	"	T. F. McCulloch			
1902	"	J. H. Moten			
1903	"	W. Lat Harris			
1904	"	O. P. Routh			
1905-07	"	W. C. Lassiter			
1908-12	"	William M. Pike			
1913-16	"	J. A. Ledbetter			
1917-24	"	George W. Holmes			
1925-33	"	John A. Burgess			
1934-37	"	Hubert L. Isley			
1938-	"	George R. Brown			
1939-40	"	George L. Reynolds			
1941-42	"	Henry B. Lewis			
1943	"	Ernie Phifer succeeded by Ray Rowland			
1944	"	Ray Rowland			
1945-46	"	Donald W. Durham			
1947	"	Donald W. Durham succeeded by Wm. A. Seawell			
1948	"	William M. Wells			
1949-51	"	John D. Cranford			
1952-53	"	Euel E. Bingham			
1954-55	"	Marshall Burnett			
1956-58	"	Denver Stone			
1959-	"	Lloyd G. Hunsucker			

In 1916 under the pastorate of Rev. J. A. Ledbetter, the church was remodeled by the addition of an entrance at the south end, a bell and belfry, and the church was painted and covered. The carpenters were: Theophilus Nicholson, Ebb Nicholson, and Ressa W. Lindley.

In 1930 during the pastorate of Rev. J. A. Burgess, four classrooms were built to the north end of the church at an estimated cost of \$775.00 but most of the material and work was donated by various individuals. Newton Stafford gave most liberally of time and labor until the work was completed. John M. Foust gave the framing for one room. Ressa Lindley, George Roberson, John M. Foust, Herbert Foust, Harvey Woody, and others gave work. Cash donations were contributed by Gray, Lon, Lawrence, Sallie, Ralph Ollie, and Webb McPherson, Albert, Minnie, Garcia, and Arlene Foust, Ralph Holmes, Daisy Dixon, James B. McVey, Ella, Ed, and Arthur G. Thompson, Robert F. Holman, Floy Rogers, Kate Watson, Dora Andrews, and Walter Stockard.

In 1932 the vestibule of the church was divided with classrooms on the right and left and the sanctuary entrance was changed from doors on the right and left to a center double door.

In 1934 the church was painted at a cost of \$135.00. The two heaters, which long ago had replaced the pot-bellied stove in the center of the building but used the same flue through the middle of the roof, were replaced by two heatrola stoves and two new flue were built on the outside of the church from the ground up at a cost of \$108.00. Albert L. Foust donated one of the heatrolas.

In 1935 under the pastorate of Rev. Hubert L. Isley, a new roof was put on the church at a cost of \$332.00, and in 1936 the interior of the church was fixed with sheetrock. Lonnie McPherson and Mrs. Albert (Minnie) Foust paid for the material.

The first piano was purchased in 1930.

In 1941 under the pastorate of Rev. G. L. Reynolds, land was donated by Lon McPherson and the parsonage was built.

In 1948 under the pastorate of Rev. Wm. A. Seawell, and Brooks Coveney as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the church was remodeled by raising it, brick veneering it, digging a basement and making more rooms. Everett Stout's sons Marvin, John, and Everett, Jr. dug the basement with their bulldozer. Boss Griffin was the brickmason. Many of the people of the community helped with their means, their time, and their services, both the young and old. The oldest man in the church, Albert Foust, contributed one thousand dollars and spent every day for several weeks helping hand up bricks, and Johnny Braxton, a small boy, was held up and permitted to lay the top brick in the gable at the north end.

At that time memorial windows were put in, and also a hardwood floor and new carpet. New pews were purchased. The old ones were sold to individuals who had them make into tables or other furniture. A gas heating system was installed.

In 1956 new shingles were put over the old roof, and in 1957 the sanctuary and some classrooms were painted by Bill Jewell.

In 1958 under the pastorate of Denver Stone, with Ralph Holmes as Chairman of the Official Board, two classrooms and two toilets were built at a cost of ten thousand dollars.

Bethel Missionary Society was organized in March 1905 under the direction of Miss Margaret Kuhns, returned Missionary from Japan, who later married Rev. A. G. Dixon. The first president of the Woman's Missionary Society was Mrs. Inez Foust. The charter members were: Inez Foust, Sarah McPherson, Lelia Holman, Pearl Newlin, Manie Moore, Mary P. Thompson, and Lotitia Stockard.

Two members have gone out from Bethel to become ministers: Horatio Seymour Blair Thompson and William Albright Seawell; and two to become missionaries: Cordia Lee Thompson, daughter of Cicero and Mary Lambe Thompson, and Dorothy Thompson (Mrs. Paul Bunn), daughter of Lonnie A. and Sarah Stafford Thompson.

The Bethel Memorial Association was organized in 1927 under the direction of Mr. McBride Holt. Officers were elected as follows:

President-----	Lonnie McPherson
First Vice-President-----	Wm. Herbert Foust
Second Vice-President-----	W. W. Workman
Secretary-----	Miss Bessie Holmes
Treasurer-----	Albert L. Foust

Miss Holmes served as secretary for four years and was succeeded by Miss Marcia Foust. Albert Foust served as treasurer until his death in 1956 and was succeeded by Harvey C. Foust. The office of presidency has been filled by the following persons: Lonnie McPherson, Herbert Foust, J. Harvey Woody, W. Rezzie Foust, Otis R. Cook, John M. Foust, William A. Seawell, J. DeWitt Foust, Raymond Braxton, Wayne Woody, Ralph W. Holmes, Lacy M. Starr, Tyree S. Lindley, Bob Roberson, J. Sabert Thompson, Earl Johnson, T. C. Boone, Jr., James P. McPherson, Mrs. Frances Roberson Marlette, and Mrs. Eunice McPherson.

