

History
of
Bethesda Methodist Church
Barnesville, North Carolina



1711-1956

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of

BETHESDA METHODIST CHURCH

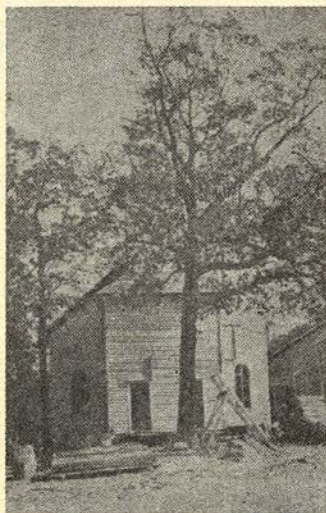
Barnesville, North Carolina

1711 - 1956

Sponsored by
Sanford Jenkins Circle
of the
Woman's Society of Christian Service

History of Bethesda Methodist Church

Bethesda Methodist Church is the oldest church of any denomination in Robeson County, having been organized in 1711. At first glance, it would seem that an error had been made since John Wesley did not have his heart-warming experience at Aldersgate until 1738. It is true that Bethesda has not been a Methodist church since 1711, but the oldest members in the church say that Bethesda began as a Community Church, and years later became a Methodist Church. Records state that Bethesda was the only church between Lumberton, N. C. and Marion, S. C., as late as 1850. The first church was built about two miles from the present site, in the



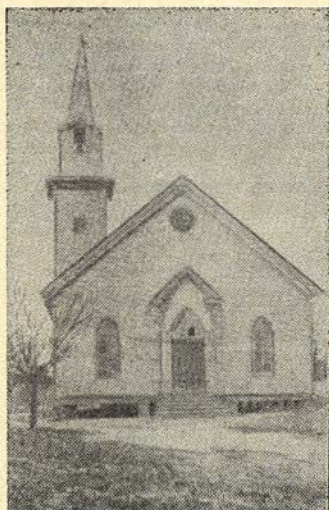
Old Bethesda Methodist Church
which Consolidated with McKendree

village of Barnesville. This was a two-story building, the upper story being used for the colored people and the lower for the white people. About 1850 this building was torn down and another

erected using bannister railing to cut off the section for colored people. Later that building was remodeled and the section for the colored people was taken out. The remodeled building remained as it was until 1914 when Rev. B. E. Stanfield remodeled the church, by building a tower which stood until the new brick building was completed.

Bethesda Church was organized before there was a Bladen County or Elizabethtown was the county seat. Bladen Circuit was formed immediately after the close of the Revolutionary War and extended from the Little Pee Dee River on the South and West, and to the Cape Fear River on the North, embracing all of Horry County and part of Marion County in South Carolina, and all of Robeson, Columbus, Bladen and part of Cumberland County in North Carolina. Wilmington and Fayetteville were appointments on the Bladen Circuit. There were two preachers for the Circuit — Thomas Shaw and Samuel Mills. It took them ten weeks to make the rounds of appointments. For a period of not less than forty years a preacher's salary was not more than sixty-four dollars. Beginning in 1806, Rev. John Oliver, who was reared in Moore County, moved to Robeson County and preached on this charge the following seventy five years.

In the year 1851, the state line between North and South Carolina was made the separating lines between North and South Carolina conferences, and Bethesda Church came under the jurisdiction of the North Carolina conference, having been in the South Carolina conferences since the earliest days. For a long period after the formation of the South Carolina conference, North Carolina belonged to the Virginia and South Carolina conference, and remained so until the North Carolina conference was organized as a separate conference.



**McKendree Methodist Church which
Consolidated with Bethesda Church**

About the year 1904, part of the members of Bethesda Church organized a new Society and built a new church near Barnesville under the name of McKendree Methodist Church, which was placed with the same charge as Bethesda. The circuit at this time was named the "Robeson Charge".

In November 1926, the Annual Conference in Durham, N. C. assigned Rev. F. B. Peele to the charge. As Bethesda was needing a new church building, it had been previously discussed by the former pastor Rev. N. B. Johnson, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. E. M. Floyd, Sr. Mrs. Floyd made it a point to contact the new pastor as early as possible upon his arrival on the charge, and discuss the possibility of a new church building with him. McKendree and Bethesda would have to consolidate in order to get assistance in building from the Duke Fund. The two churches were too close in proximity to get it otherwise. The result was that at the close of his second service at McKendree, he called a meeting of the Official Board and talked over the plan of consolidating with Bethesda and the erection of a modern building. In less than four days all of the members had agreed to consolidate and signed an agreement

which they sent to their pastor. On February 11, 1927, which was the first quarterly conference, the conference confirmed the consolidation.

On February 13, 1927, the last service was conducted in McKendree Church.. The people began planning for a new building and working with faith. Their materials were bought in the summer when prices were lower, and delivered the first week in September. On September 14, the new building was started with all the materials bought for its completion. With the aid of free labor and cooperation from church members and people in the community, and the beautiful fall weather, the building was completed on December 14, 1927 exactly three months after it was started. This building was helped greatly by the Duke Endowment Fund with a gift of \$4,000.00 which enabled the people to build a \$20,500.00 church and leave it clear of debt. The Building Committee consisted of the following: W. S. Floyd Chairman, Nash Hardin, Berry Walters, and Rev. F. B. Peele, pastor in charge.

Much of the credit for this splendid new church building goes to Rev. F. B. Peele of Fairmont, pastor of Robeson Charge. Presiding Elder C. L. Read said "Rev. Peele is a genius for church building as well as a great factor for working out things for God and the coming of His Kingdom". Rev. Peele supervised the work and spent much of his time there. When he needed money for payments, he went to his congregation and the money was supplied. It is noteworthy that the largest subscription to this splendid new building was \$137.50 but many free contributions were made. The people of Bethesda Church realized what a wonderful pastor they had, so during the year 1927 they raised his salary \$500.00.

Bethesda Church was the only brick rural church in Robeson County. It was 85 feet long and 68½ feet wide. The main auditorium was 56x34 feet. The building also contained nine Sunday School rooms. The membership at this time was only 369. The Church Trustees were Messrs. W. S. Floyd, Richard Hardin, and Warren Jenkins.



Bethesda Methodist Church

On December 25 1927 Christmas morning, at the eleven o'clock service, Bethesda Methodist Church was formally dedicated by Presiding Elder C. L. Read of the Rockingham District assisted by Rev. F. B. Peele, of the Robeson Charge. The main auditorium, aisles and adjoining Sunday School rooms were packed with people who came from all parts of the country for this occasion. Among these were Rev. Peele's mother, sister and brother; Mrs. A. H. Peele, Mrs. D. C. Lytch and Mackie Peele of Gibson, N. C.

Presiding Elder C. L. Read preached the dedicatory sermon. He used as his text; "Have Faith in God", I Corinthians 3:9. He said "All work that amounts to anything is based on faith in God. If we trace back the history of any nation we would see the results of a definite, conspicuous, forward-looking faith in God. That has been the history of our country, and it has been the history of the church of God, and it is but the history of the nation. Our fathers came to this country, fleeing from persecuion, where they might establish a church of faith, and find a place where they could worship God according to the dictates of their own hearts. They laid the foundation here for a new civilization. The home, Church, and school were made the foundation and on them has been built

a civilization that is a wonder of this world. The secret of it all is that they had faith in God. Our fathers sought God, and found God and He has endowed their America as the richest nation. We should use these riches for the glory of God. Let us keep God in the forefront. Have faith in God because 'Ye are the laborers together with God.' "

Rev. Read congratulated the people again and again on their building. He commended them for going forward for God and putting the beautiful Temple here at this place to the honor of God. He said "If we will put God first, God will hold us up and honor us. Let us always continue to try to honor God with our best; let the generations to come be justified in saying that our fathers built the church through love and praise for God." Rev. Read paid high tribute to Rev. Peele, pastor of the charge. He spoke of the greatness of his brother Dr. W. W. Peele, who is pastor of the largest church in North Carolina but he said "He is doing no greater work than his brother Rev. F. B. Peele." Rev. Read said that Robeson Charge was not only one of the outstanding charges of the Rockingham District but of the North Carolina Conference.

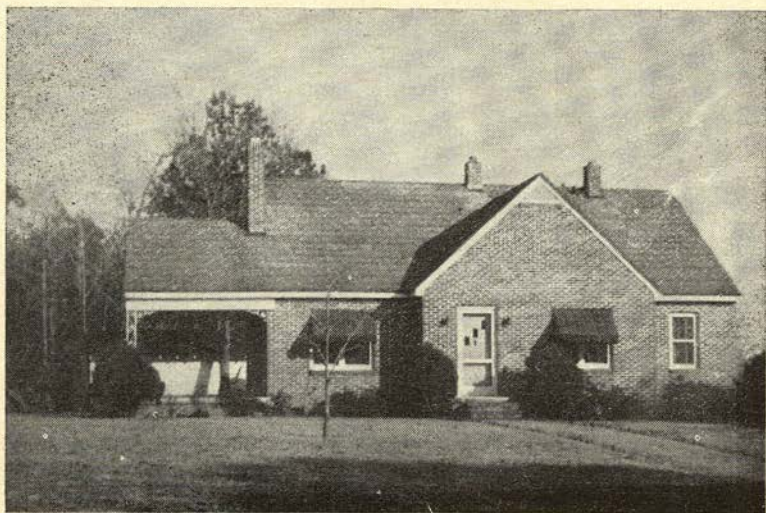
Mr. W. S. Floyd presented the building to the North Carolina Conference and Rev. Read accepted it. The pastor at this time explained that Bethesda congregation had also purchased and paid for a \$700.00 hot air heating plant; that \$225.00 for chairs in the Sunday School room were almost paid for; and that he had the promise of the members of the congregation to buy other chairs for these rooms. He also said that he hoped new pews would be placed in the church sometime during the year, and that they too, would be paid for. He then thanked the members for what they had done in working together to construct the building.

Rev. B. E. Stanfield, a former beloved pastor, assisted Rev. Peele in the first revival to be held in the new church in the fall of 1928.

After the modern brick building was completed, the only one in the rural area of the county, the people continued to do all they could for their pastor. The parsonage was located in Fairmont, and during the year 1931, Bethesda bought a bedroom suite and a set of dishes for the parsonage, when Rev. J. W. Bradley was their pastor. In 1935 when Rev. J. E. Blalock was pastor, Bethesda gained

fifty new members the first quarter of the conference year. The Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized. Before the end of three years, a cement walk was added to improve the church grounds. New pews were purchased and electric lights were installed. In 1938, eleven years after Bethesda was dedicated, it was redecorated and painted and new Methodist Hymnals were purchased. Two years later 1940, when Rev. F. B. Joyner was pastor, a new heating plant was installed. During this year the Woman's Society of Christian Service was organized with Mrs. D. F. Floyd as the first President. On October 13, 1940 the Epworth League was organized. Bethesda does not, however, live on its past record as many of the old churches are inclined to do, but it continues to grow. Not only is the church old but it is large, considering the fact that it is located in a rural area. Its membership in 1947 was 533. When the church was built twenty years earlier, the membership was only 369. For many years it was a circuit with Fairmont and Olivet churches. In November 1946 it was taken off the Fairmont charge and with Olivet formed the South Robeson charge. The number on roll in 1956 is 459.

On March 3, 1947, permission was granted to build a parson-



Bethesda Methodist Church Parsonage

age for Bethesda and Marietta-South Robeson charge. The following Parsonage Committee was appointed: Dayton Hardin, M. F. Ivey, and Mrs. D. F. Floyd, for Bethesda and for Marietta, Paul S. Oliver, J. S. Oliver, and W. M. Oliver. In addition to the above named, the following were added to decide on the location of the parsonage; R. W. Britt, and Luther Walters for Bethesda and W. M. Oliver and B. L. Temple for Marietta. The committee decided the parsonage would be located in the churchyard at Bethesda. During the conference year 1946-1947, the parsonage was started and completed. It was built and furnished at a cost of around \$18,000.00. The house which was built of brick, contained a living room, dining room, kitchen, two bed rooms, study and bath. It was modern in every respect. To undertake such a building program as this, was a great task for the church, but all of the members cooperated and two years later, on September 4, 1949 Bishop W. W. Peele dedicated the parsonage of Bethesda Methodist Church. The members of the church were pleased to have Bishop Peele with them as it was under the leadership of his brother, Rev. F. B. Peele, that the present church building was constructed. Also during this year Bethesda became a Station church, paying a salary of \$2500.00, bought and paid for a Minshall-Estey Electric Organ, a lawn mower, a garage was built at the parsonage, and the church was painted. The pastor, during the years 1947-1951, Rev. J. Paul Edwards, had the distinction of being the first full-time pastor at Bethesda, the first pastor to live in the new parsonage, and being a young college graduate, and recently married this was his first home for his bride. His wife was a music graduate and she organized a Junior Choir and played the new electric organ in church.

In 1951 more repairs were made on the church, and the pastor Rev. D. W. Charlton, started a building fund for future use in enlarging the church and adding Sunday School rooms. Hymn Book racks were restored to the church pews by Grover Hardin and Fay Floyd. The church was also re-wired by Clarence Floyd, Fay Floyd and Hubert Britt.

During 1951 and 1952 the Woman's Society of Christian Service grew to be so large that it was divided into six smaller circles. Mrs. Charlton helped greatly with this organization. She also taught the Young Woman's Sunday School Class and helped them plan for their Class meetings once a month to transact all their

business instead of using their Class Period on Sunday morning. Each of the six circles were named for some outstanding member of Bethesda Church as follows:

The Edwards Circle, named for a former pastor, Rev. J. Paul Edwards.

The Ina Floyd Circle, named for the first President of the W.S.C.S.

Sanford Jenkins Circle, named for Sanford Jenkins an outstanding Sunday School teacher and active in all phases of church work.

Linwood Blackburn Circle, named for a young missionary who came here and did outstanding work with our Society.

Jimmy McLean Circle, named for Mrs. Jimmy Floyd McLean.

Pauline McLellan Circle named for Pauline McLellan outstanding and active in all phases of church work.

During this time a Nursery Department was started to enable more people to attend church. Also during the year 1952 the Woman's Society of Christian Service bought a Kneeling Pad for the Chancel to afford more comfort to communicants and for other purposes. During the time our present pastor, Rev. A. L. Reynolds, has been with us, the church has been beautified immensely. The greatest asset was the installation of new stained glass memorial windows in the church sanctuary. They were given by members of the church in honor and in memory of the following members:

Sanford F. Jenkins and wife Carrie B. Jenkins

Mrs. Sada Lewis

H. Dayton Hardin and wife Donna Bell Hardin

Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Hardin

Mr. and Mrs. Mc. F. Floyd

Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Britt

Jeanette Walters

J. P. Murray and wife A. V. Murray

B. F. Wade and wife Rosa F. Wade

George Sealey and wife Julia

Henry L. Floyd

After these were installed, the class rooms were painted in pastel colors. The Woman's Society of Christian Service installed lights in the yard of the church. A new Chrysler Hot Air Heating System was bought to replace the old one. An electric organ was traded for a new one. In 1954 metal posts were installed on the parsonage porch and the next year 1955, a new floor furnace was bought for the parsonage. In May of this year 1956, the church roof was covered.

The members of Bethesda Church are proud of the progress they have made. These things that have been mentioned are only some of the larger and outstanding things that have been accomplished, but dearer than all of these are the small things that have been done to bring about a closer relationship with members in the church. Visiting the sick, helping the old and needy, doing things for our "Secret Pals", and the friendliness of each one as they greet each other on Sunday morning, means more to us than anything that money can buy. Probably the secret of our success is the ability to work together and the love the members have for each other and their church. We are proud of it and want to see it progress. Bethesda Church would like to have always as their motto "We are Laborers Together With God",

Harvest Day has been observed in our church for many years. Below is shown the amounts collected each year as far back as we have records.

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| October 12, 1947 | \$ 392.65 |
| October 30, 1948 | 503.00 |
| October 22, 1949 | 316.70 |
| November 11, 1950 | 426.75 |
| October 20, 1951 | 500.00 |
| October 18, 1952 | 973.45 |
| October 10, 1953 | 1,873.11 |
| October 9, 1954 | 1,841.39 |
| October 8, 1955 | 1,321.45 |

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

LADIES ADULT CLASS

Sanford Jenkins
Mrs. D. F. Floyd
Mrs. George Jenkins
Mrs. E. M. Floyd, Sr.
Mrs. Gilbert Britt
Mrs. Emory Stone
Mrs. Stanton Rogers

YOUNG MEN'S CLASS

G. R. Floyd
T. S. McLellan
E. M. Floyd, Jr.
Luther Walters
Manus Britt

MEN'S BIBLE CLASS

B. F. Wade
Morgan Rogers
Emory Stone

YOUNG WOMAN'S CLASS

Sarah Ann Haynes
Miss Mary Janet McNeill
Miss Mary Hugh Stewart
Mrs. D. W. Charlton
Mrs. Frederick Floyd
Mrs. E. O. Johnson
Mrs. E. M. Floyd, Sr.
Roscoe Barnes
Miss Gracie Hardin
Miss Rachel Floyd

CHARTER MEMBERS WOMAN'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mrs. D. F. Floyd, President | Mrs. Pheora Floyd |
| Mrs. Kelly Johnson | Mrs. Albert Hardin, Treas. |
| Mrs. R. A. Hardin | Mrs. Grover Hardin |
| Mrs. E. O. Johnson Cor. Sec. | Mrs. Sim McLellan Rec. Sec. |
| Mrs. Lula J. Herring | Mrs. Rodney Sealey |

(CHARTER MEMBERS W. S. C. S. CONTINUED)

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Mrs. D. O. Floyd | Mrs. S. F. Jenkins |
| Mrs. Earl Lewis | Mrs. W. P. Barker |
| Mrs. Bishop Jenkins | Mrs. Daisy Lee |
| Mrs. Gilbert Britt | Mrs. Hazley Barfield |
| Mrs. Bernice Lewis | Mrs. Clarissa Ivey |
| Mrs. J. C. Lee | Mrs. D. L. Lee |
| Mrs. Dayton Hardin | Mrs. Ed Barfield |
| Mrs. Clayton Faulk | Mrs. Robert Ford |
| Mrs. Aubrey Floyd | Mrs. George Jenkins |
| Mrs. J. O. Lee | Mrs. Glenn Jenkins |
| Mrs. H. G. Hardin | Mrs. Margaret Murray |
| Mrs. Hybert Hardin | Mrs. Ora Lewis |
| Mrs. Wilbur Britt, Local Treas. | |

PASTORS SERVING ROBESON CHARGE

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| J. C. Sinclair | William Jordan |
| J. B. Martin | John Tillette |
| S. D. Adams | Ira T. Wyche |
| Rev. Plyer | Samuel Mills |
| Paul J. Galloway | B. R. Hall |
| Simon D. Peeler | J. J. Carden |
| R. C. Bibb | M. W. Boyles |
| Rev. Scoville | C. M. Pepper |
| Thomas Shaw | John Oliver |
| W. S. Chafin | |

(Pastors Serving Robeson Charge Continued)

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| J. Sanford ----- | 1888 |
| S. V. Hoyle ----- | 1889-1890 |
| V. N. Journey ----- | 1891-1892 |
| J. Sanford ----- | 1893-1894 |
| E. Pope ----- | 1895-1898 |
| B. T. Harrison ----- | 1899-1900 |
| B. C. Allred ----- | 1901-1902 |
| J. M. Ashby ----- | 1903-1906 |
| J. T. Dailey ----- | 1907-1908 |
| C. W. Smith ----- | 1909-1911 |
| S. T. Moyle ----- | 1912-1913 |
| B. E. Stanfield ----- | 1914-1917 |
| J. T. Draper ----- | 1918-1919 |
| W. F. Traywick ----- | 1920-1923 |
| N. B. Johnson ----- | 1924-1926 |
| F. B. Peele ----- | 1927-1930 |
| J. W. Bradley ----- | 1931-1934 |
| J. E. Blalock ----- | 1935-1938 |
| W. R. Dixon ----- | Last half of 1938 |
| F. B. Joyner ----- | 1939-1942 |
| B. F. Boone ----- | 1942-1947 |
| Paul Edwards ----- | 1947-1951 |
| D. W. Charlton ----- | 1951-1952 |
| A. L. Reynolds ----- | 1952-1956 |
| G. L. Kinley ----- | 1956 |

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

McKENDREE

BETHESDA (old church)

Kelly Barnes

Henry Britt

B. F. Wade

Foster Walters

Warren Jenkins

M. F. Ivey (1914)

NEW BETHESDA CHURCH

B. F. Wade (Finished out year after consolidation
1927)

M. F. Ivey (1914-1950). During this time Warren
Jenkins served one year and Duncan
McLellan one year)

Willie Sealey

1951-1954

Manus Britt

1955-1956

IN MEMORIAM

ALVIE IVEY

WORLD WAR I

ELBRETH JOHNSON

WORLD WAR I

MILTON FLOYD

WORLD WAR II

WILTON McKELLAN

KOREAN WAR

LAWRENCE BLAKE FOLYD

KOREAN WAR

BOYD FRANKIN FLOYD

KOREAN WAR