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Bethlehem Uniion History, 1852-2023

Bethlehem United Methodist Church Union

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**Bethlehem
United
Methodist
Church
History
1852 – 2009
157 Years**

Union, SC

In the latter part of the 1700's, the Circuit Riders began to travel through the area at a time when peace began to be made with the Indians following the Revolutionary War. Preaching was held at various campgrounds and sometimes the Circuit Riders would spend the night at Pinckneyville where they would cross Broad River by ferry boat at the junction with the Pacolet River.

Also, John C. Calhoun and others on their way to Washington would follow the Stagecoach Road and spend the night in the hotel at Pinckneyville. District Court was held here which included York, Union and Chester counties. Later, around 1801 or 1802, due to weather conditions and bad roads, the District Court at Pinckneyville was moved to a better location known as Union.

The records show that Bethlehem Church probably had its beginning around the latter part of the 1700's. Accounts of the "Brush Harbor" and the "Campground" services have been handed down for many years to the present time. There is tangible proof that the site of Bethlehem Church Cemetery was used as early as 1825. People traveled to these services by wagon or horseback and the families that lived close by walked. Somewhere in this area was a one room building known as "The Little Red Schoolhouse" where many of the early residents received their education.

As the area began to grow, it was known as the Enoree Circuit of the Saluda District from 1805-1832. In 1833 the area was known as the Union Circuit of the Saluda District. In 1846 following the withdrawal Southern Methodist Episcopal Churches from the national body our area became part of the Union Circuit of the Cokebury District. According to church history, Bethlehem Church (presently the only other church of the Kelton Charge) was organized in 1852 and was part Union Station.

In the mid-1870's this area was a part of the Fairforest Circuit of the Spartanburg District of the South Carolina Conference. Churches in the circuit were: Bethlehem, Wesley Chapel, Flat Rock, Bogansville, and New Hope. According to the records, of name of the circuit was changed from Fairforest Circuit to the Jonesville Circuit in 1875. The first quarterly conference to record was held for Jonesville Circuit at Flat Rock Church on January 29, 1876.

In 1876, J.D. McNeace became a member of Bethlehem Church by baptism. He became a Charge Steward in 1878 and attended the second

quarterly conference for Jonesville Circuit that was held at Bethlehem Church on Monday, May 20, 1878. In the pastor's report, at said conference, Rev. G.M. Boyd included the following as part of his report: "We are advancing in general. Two new churches are in contemplation which will be built during the summer."

On December 7, 1887, the Fourth Quarterly Conference of Jonesville Circuit, Spartanburg District, South Carolina Conference was held and the following was recorded: "The liberality of the brothers may be seen in the two new and beautiful church buildings erected this year."

William E. McNeace was a son of Andrew and Susan McNeace. The McNeace family attended Bethlehem Church. Susan McNeace, William's mother is buried in Bethlehem Church Cemetery and William is buried in Grace United Methodist Church Cemetery in Union, South Carolina.

After Bethlehem Church was established in 1852 it became part of Union Station and was served by the following ministers and assistants:

- 1852 W.A. Gourewell
- 1853 W.A. Gourewell and A.H. Lester
- 1854 Wm. A. McSwain and A.H. Lester
- 1855 W.P. Mouzon and Landy Wood
- 1856 Wm. Martin and Samuel J. Hill
- 1857 S.H. Brown and E.J. Gage
- 1858 Wm. A. McSwain and H.D. Moore
- 1859 C. Murchison and A.W. Moore
The church grounds were deeded by Daniel and Lucie Gallman on September 6, 1859 (Deed Book: C-21, Page 567 September 6, 1859 Recorded November 11, 1869).
- 1860 C. Murchison and T. F. Barton
- 1861 J.H. Zimmerman, J.P. Depass, and C. Murchison supply
- 1862 No Record
- 1863 H.A.C. Walker and C. Murchison supply

1864 H.A.C. Walker and C. Murchison

1865 O.A. Darby, N.K. Melton, and C. Murchison supply

From the time of its establishment through 1858, Bethlehem was in the Cokesbury District. Beginning in 1859 the Spartanburg District was formed and since that time Bethlehem has been a member of that District.

At the Annual Conference of 1865 held in Charlotte, North Carolina on November 1 of that year Union Circuit was divided into Unionville Station, Bellmont Circuit, Cain Creek Circuit, and Fairforest Circuit, later to be known as Jonesville Circuit.

The following Ministers served under this arrangement:

1866 N.K. Melton

1867 Was left to be supplied.

It is noted that in 1867 Alexander Hall, a colored man having stood a creditable examination was licensed to preach.

1868 J.B. Massebeau

1869 A.J. Stokes It is noted that at the first Quarterly Conference in 1869, Bethlehem reported \$11.42, ½ on salary.

1870 Max H. Hoyle

1871-1872 James F. Smith

1873-1876 J.B. Wilson

The name of circuit was changed from Fairforest to Jonesville in 1875. Records show that the first Quarterly Conference was held at Flat Rock Church on January 29, 1876.

1878 G.M. Boyd

1879-1880 J.C. Counts

1881 J.R. McCain

In 1882, Bethlehem Church was closed and re-opened in 1885.

1886 C.D. Rowell – He served into the year 1887 and died on the work.

1887 J.E. McHaffey succeeded C.D. Rowell and finished out the year. The records show that Bethlehem Church had 187 members at that time.

1888-1892 D.P. Boyd

Church Conferences were held regularly at this time and the records show that some officials were dismissed from office for being negligent in office and several members for violating church regulations.

1892-1893 Dave Tiller

The Jonesville Circuit was divided in 1893. Foster's Chapel, Flat Rock, Wesley's Chapel, and Mesopotamia formed the Kelton Circuit.

Bethlehem remained on the Jonesville work until 1903 when it became a part of Kelton Charge. Later on Wesley's Chapel was assigned to Lockhart Methodist. Flat Rock merged into Foster's Chapel. Around 1962 Mesopotamia was removed to a Cherokee County Circuit.

1894 J.I. Porter

1895-1897 B.W. Spiegrier

1898-1899 E.H. Beckon

1900 David Hucks

Mr. Huck was the last minister to serve work from Jonesville Circuit.

Since becoming part of Kelton Charge the following ministers have served the church.

1903-1905 A.H. Best

1906-1907 John G. Farr

1908-1909 J.A. White

1910-1912 J.H. Manley

1913-1914 T.F. Gibson

The church building burned, and the second building was built

- 1914-1915 F.E. Hodges
- 1916-1917 J.R. Copeland
- 1918-1919 W.C. Kelly
- 1920-1922 Jacob F. Gollightly
Communion plates donated to Bethlehem Church by Mrs. Della Gallman in 1920. These are now located in the vestibule.
- 1922-1923 W.A. Duckworth
- 1923-1924 R.L. Doggett
- 1925-1926 J.W. Hoyle
- 1927-1928 C.P. Carter
- 1928-1931 N.M. Phillips
- 1932-1935 M.A. Cleckly
- 1936-1937 A.J. Bowling
In 1937, Maude Palmer was playing organ and continued to do so until around 1964.
- 1937-1940 C.W. Watson
Died while under appointment here.
- 1940 W. Harold Smith
Served 3 months due to the death of Rev. Watson.
Moving day from this date until 1958 was in October.
- 1940-1943 Harry Chandler
Young people organized with Mrs. Mary Bentley as counselor.
- 1943-1946 Albert S. Harvey
In 1944, the church building was torn down and built back in 1945.

During the time the church was down (1944-1945), church services were held at the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Miles D.B.S. Gallman. This church stood until July 1963 when it was torn down and replaced by the present brick church.

- 1946-1949 George J. Hughes
- 1949-1951 Roy L. Owens
- 1952-1954 John Henry Ford
- 1954-1956 A.E. Smith
There was \$19,000 in the church building fund.
- 1956-1958 John Mason Stapleton, Jr.
In 1957, the Women's Society of Christian Service was organized with Mrs. Lena (Guy) Scales as president.

Moving day from this date to the present is in June.

- 1958-1960 E.A. Wilkes III
- 1958-1961 There was \$19,800 in the church building fund.
- 1960-1964 Robert Davenport
The present building was built with the formal opening on January 19, 1964, and the dedication service of the new church was March 17, 1968.
- 1964-1966 Richard Covington
The Men's Club was organized in 1963. In 1965 Wayne Dill played the piano and continued until 1970 with Joan Ponder playing in his absence. The current communion plates were donated by Kenneth and Earle Horne in honor of their father C.B. Horne.
- 1966-1967 Urban Pattillo
The present parsonage was built.
- 1967-1971 Dennis Roy Dickerson, Jr.
The first to live in the new parsonage. The charter was given for the Women's Society of Christian Service in the United Methodist Church on November 3, 1968.
Karen Horne began playing the piano.
- 1971-1974 Louis M. Adams
- 1974-1978 Herndon Shepherd
Carpet was first laid in the church by the women.

1978-1987 Brice B. Blakeney
On December 25, 1978, cabinets were given by Mr. and Mrs. Velmer Bentley in memory of and in honor of their many friends.
In 1981, the organ was purchased and given in memory of Dorothy Tweed. Donna Manus became the organist at that time and in 1987 she also became the pianist for Bethlehem.
When Sally Palmer died in 1981, she was the oldest member of Bethlehem Church at 94 years of age. The Christian Fellowship Center was built.
In 1983, the Young Adult Class taught by A.G. Carter with 52 members voted unanimously, in addition to the Senior Citizens Class, to observe a "Mary Fowler Bentley Day". This celebration took place on July 17, 1983 when she was presented a plaque of love and dedication for her many years of service. After the program most delicious meal was served by the group.
In 1986, construction began on the Christian Fellowship Building and it was completed in time for the annual homecoming dinner on September 21, 1986.

1987 B. Craig Douglas

1988-1992 Denver L. Lee
The two oldest members at Bethlehem Church are Julia Fincher and John Knox. The church has 167 members on roll. In April 1988, Angie Gossett came to Bethlehem Church as the organist.

1992-1999 Larry Hyder
He baptized 6 children from 4 families on November 1, 1992. Four of the boys were born within a one month period of time.
New lights were donated by William and Betty Scales and installed in the sanctuary on February 17, 1994.
Floyd and Linda Heatherly purchased and installed the cross that hangs in the choir loft on March 2, 1994, in

loving memory of their daughter, Melinda Kay, who died in a car accident on October 30, 1975.

1999-2000 John Williams, III

2000-2007 Keith Sweat

The Fred Harris Wing was added in 2002.

The new storage room addition to the fellowship building was finished on Saturday, June 30, 2001. The cost was approximately \$10,000 which was paid for from the dinner fund.

2007-present J. Christopher Greene

The following among others have served as Superintendents of Sunday School:

William Bevis, William Lyles, J. F. Harris, A. G. Bentley, J. N. Gallman, G. W. Bentley, Thomas N. Kelly, V. E. Bentley, Albert Buice, Ralph Gregory, Kenneth McCraw, Kenneth Horne, Robert Knox and Mike Scales.

There have been two men to come out of Bethlehem Church who have become ministers. They are Carl Harris and Sam Knox. Emily Scales is currently attending Duke Divinity School at Duke University and is scheduled to be ordained next year as a Methodist Minister.

Family names that have been on the Church Roll for years include: Harris, Gallman, Bevis, Hancock, Bentley, Knox, Vinson, Dalton, Lyles, McNeace, Faucett, Kelly, Scales, Elrod, Palmer, Atkinson, Heatherly, McCraw, Smith, Carter, Taylor, Horne, Moyer, Brewington, Eaves and Adams.

Recorded deaths since April 1950:

George Bentley
Sam Harris
Emerson Bates
Willie Scales
Miles Gallman
Shirley Gallman Lackey
Harold Vinson
John Bentley
C. B. Horne
Mrs. Ida Horne
Newell Gallman
Charlie C. Knox
John Lawrence Knox
Tom J. Vinson
Stella Bentley Carter
Tom M. Tweed
Pocahontas Bentley Hedgepath
Mrs. R. E. Brewington
Jesse Thomas Gallman
L. J. Smith
Thomas Jeff Vinson
Mary Faucett
Tom Helems
Dewey Tweed
Sidney Palmer
Ada Hodge Knox
William Clyde Knox, Sr.
Belle Palmer Harris
Hettie Gallman
Della Gallman
Mrs. Laurie Knox
Lucy Bantley
Claude Smith
Oscar Tweed
Paul Knox
Mrs. Herbert Gault
Jack Harris

Charlie Palmer
Vernon Howell
Kate James Faucett
Julia Palmer Harris
Melinda Kay Heatherly
Nettie Palmer ~~Scott~~ Scales
Dorothy Tweed
James Knox, Sr.
Albert Buice
Oetzel Gallman
Bessie Hodge Knox
Wilbur Knox
Loree Foster
Sara Eaves
Marshall Harris
Weldon Knox
Josie Horne
Everette Taylor
Odell T. Eaves
Vera Gallman
Dan Gallman
Mack Palmer
William Robert (Bill) Knox
A. G. Knox
Alfred Walter Knox
Robert Harris
Beulah Knox Peahuff
Josie Palmer Bentley
Sallie Gault Palmer
Ida Bentley
Wallace Fincher
John F. Faucett
Alice Walls Knox
Bunyan W. Adams
John Knox
Bulter Carter
Maude Palmer
Billy Ray McKee

Deaths continued:

Grace Gault
Virginia B. Knox
Lynn Harris
Leslie Dale Parkins
John Palmer
Eloise Scales Johnson
William Gerald Gallman
Harry Tweed
Mary Bentley Faucett
Fred Harris
Irene Sanders Harris
Gertrude Knox Hodge
Earl Bentley
R. E. Gallman, Sr.
Boyce Hodge
Bertha E. Atkinson
Annie Bell Smith
Annie B. Knox
Carl Vinson
Pearl Carter Eaves
Grace Vaughan Knox
J. G. Bentley
Julie Fincher
Annie Bell Vinson
James Johnson
Rosa Knox Hodge
Charlie Eaves
Mary Fowler Bentley
Robert Lee Eaves
Cleo Gallman
Vera Knox Gibson
Bobby Tweed Palmer
Alice Lee Johnson
Beulah Peahuff
William Fred Southers
Florine S. Waldrop Gallman
Annie Mae Buice Knox
Betty Louise Sullivan
Robert G. (Bob) Bolick

Annie Mae Bentley Adams
Jack Knox
Arthur McFalls
Robert G. (Bobby) Knox, Sr.
Charles L. Knox
Helen Martha Bentley Harris
Boyd Knox
Frances V. Moyer
Helen L. Fowler
Mary Ruth Knox McFalls
Beulah Scales Ochiltree
Myrtle Palmer Moss
Gertrude Haney Knox
Wilson H. Moyer
Jimmy Donald Atkinson
Robert (Nick) Harris
Marilyn M. Teague
Guy Wilbur Scales
Kay Hirst Heatherly
Irene Murphy Knox Pendleton
Georgine E. Glass
Earle Atkinson
Sybil Jo Holcombe
Cleo Vinson Horne

The information for this history was collected from:

Old and Updated Church Records

Records from Union and Spartanburg County Courthouses

Histories of Bethlehem Church

History of Mesopotamia Methodist Church

History of Foster's Chapel Methodist Church; compiled by Roy F. Blair,
assisted by Prof. Hucks, Wofford College.

Facts handed down from one generation to the next through rememberances,
family histories, and family Bibles.

BETHLEHEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1622 KELLY ROAD
UNION, SC 29379

CHURCH HISTORY

Bethlehem's roots go as far back as the early 1700's. The first church building was a log cabin and the ministers in those days were circuit riders that rode horse back to their churches. Most circuit ministers preached many small churches. Bethlehem was a member of a 4 church circuit consisting of Bethlehem, Foster Chapel, Flat Rock and Mesopotamia. Bethlehem had church every other Sunday and alternating from morning to evening services. There is tangible proof that the site of Bethlehem Church cemetery was used as a burial site as early as 1825.

Bethlehem United Methodist Church was organized in 1852 as part of the Union Station. The first recorded minister was Rev. W.A. Gourewell in 1852. In 1858, the church became part of the Cokesbury District. In 1859, the Spartanburg District was formed and Bethlehem became part of it. The land was deeded on September 6, 1859, by Daniel and Lucie Gallman. The 2.68 acres in front of the church was bought from Berta Gallman.

In 1867, Alexander Hall, a black minister, preached at Bethlehem and by 1870 more blacks were baptized at Bethlehem than whites. In 1882, the church was closed and re-opened in 1885. Records indicate the lack of ministers at that time. The original log cabin burned in 1914 and by 1915 the second church building was erected. In 1944, this church was torn down and during the reconstruction the church met in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Miles S. (Della) Gallman. By late 1945, Bethlehem had a little white church with all its charm. The old white church was torn down and we moved in to our present brick church in 1964.

Communion plates were donated to the church by Mrs. Della Gallman in 1920. These are now on display in the church.

Maude Palmer was playing the organ in 1937 and continued to do so until around 1964. Wayne Deal played the organ from 1965-1970 and Joan Gallman Ponder played in his absence.

During the 1940s, the Youth of the church were organized with Mrs. Mary Bentley as their counselor. Others who have served as youth counselors are Mrs. Fred Knox, Mr. Fred Harris, Mr. & Mrs. Earle (Betty) Atkinson, Mrs. Cleo Horne, Mr. & Mrs. William (Betty) Scales, Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Gregory, Mr. & Mrs. R.E. (Clara) Gallman, Jr., Mrs. Linda Heatherly and Mrs. Minnie McCraw. Pam Cavender served as the Youth Leader from 1992 – 2004. Currently, Angela Fowler is serving as the Youth Leader for the UMYF and Donna Atkinson is serving as leader for the Jr. MYF.

In 1957, the Women's Society of Christian Service was organized with Mrs. Lena Scales as the first president. Still active, the Society now known as the United Methodist

Women (UMW) work for missions here and abroad. They have obtained the United Methodist Conference Five Star Award 5 times for their contribution to several mission programs including the “World Thank Offering”. They prepare baskets for shut-ins on special occasions, raise funds to assist with local disasters and host special worship events throughout the year. In March, they host the Sunday worship service to recognize “Woman’s Day in the Pulpit” and a special service of “Prayer and Self-denial”.

The present parsonage was built in 1967.

The sanctuary was carpeted in November 1974.

On December 25, 1978, cabinets were given by Velve & Mary Bentley in memory or in honor of their many friends and placed in the Sunday School rooms.

The church purchased 3.5 acres from Celeste Langley in 1980. This is the property that extends beyond our cemetery.

Church directories with pictures were published in 1980 and in 1992.

In 1981, a new organ was purchased and given in memory of Dorothy Tweed.

When Sally Palmer died in 1981, she was the oldest member of Bethlehem at the age of 94.

A puppet ministry was active from 1984 – 1986.

Being a small church, funds were limited to our general needs: maintenance, education growth, and our pledge to missions. So in order to purchase a van, add a sound system, build a family life center and grow our outreach missions we were blessed with the idea to start our Second Sunday Dinners. Mr. A.G. Carter came up with the idea and Mr. & Mrs. Bobby (Nellie Jo) Knox became the first co-chairpersons for the dinners, which began in 1985 in the small social hall of our church with people sitting in classrooms to eat. We started out servicing approximately 50 people every second Sunday. With no direct advertising, God blessed our attendance and it grew and grew. Ground breaking for the new building was held on April 6, 1986. The Christian Life Center was built in 1986 and finished in time for the annual Homecoming on September 21, 1986. Our Second Sunday Dinners grew in attendance up to 500 at times. Not only were we servicing food but also we were servicing the Lord. Our dedication and love was viewed by all that came to eat. The Sunday Dinners were more than a place to go and eat. It was a place to visit with other Christians and bring back family values. Through our Second Sunday Dinners we completely paid for our Christian Life Center, our sound system, and a van. But more important we raised money for all types of missions: southwest drought, Florida hurricane victims, North Carolina hurricane victims, and Relay for Life cancer campaign, etc...

The wooden cross was added to the front of the Christian Life Center in September 1987.

The church did not have a telephone installed until 1987.

A church van was purchased in 1985 and a new van purchased in 1991.

The two oldest members in 1988 were Julia Fincher and John Knox.

New sanctuary lights were donated by William and Betty Scales in 1994.

Floyd and Linda Heatherly purchased the gold cross that hangs in the choir loft in March of 1994 and placed it in loving memory of their daughter, Melinda Kay, who died in an automobile accident on October 30, 1975, at the age of 11.

New hymnals and pew Bibles were purchased in 1995.

Rev. Larry Hyder visited The Holy Land with Rev. Carl Harris in April 1996.

For several years, Bethlehem sponsored a Relay for Life team to help raise money to fund research for a cure for cancer. We raised over \$13,000 one year and we were recognized at the annual Relay for Life weekend at the Union County Fairgrounds.

The addition of a storage room for the Christian Life Center was completed in June 2001.

A large wing was completed in 2002 to our church that added four large classrooms, a library, and additional restrooms. Mrs. Barbara Gregory made a donation to the building fund in memory of her father, Mr. Fred Harris and the wing was dedicated as the Fred Harris Wing. Fred was a life-long member of Bethlehem church.

New carpet and pew cushions were replaced. In the last two years, we have new doors, new columns out front, a beautiful new church sign and fresh paint.

At the time of this writing, we support Epworth Children's Home with two offerings annually – Mother's Day in May and Workday in September.

We have a Bible Study that meets each Wednesday evening.

Nursing Home Ministry brings scripture and music monthly to the lives of the people at the local nursing homes and retirement centers.

Our Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) program is broken down into two separate groups: Senior High (UMYF) and Junior High (Jr. MYF). The UMYF group meets the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sunday night for devotion and fellowship. Their missions include The Soup Kitchen in Spartanburg, Salkehatchie Summer Service within S.C., Co-partners with the Jr. MYF -Christmas program for the Disability and Special Needs people in Union County. They attend many Youth Christian events: annual weekend "Spiritual Life Retreat" at Myrtle Beach, "Strength to Stand" Bible Conference in Pigeon Forge, TN and

district youth worship services and fellowship. When they return from their trip, individuals will speak to the congregation or do a special presentation. Each year in May or June, they lead one entire worship service including prayer, all music, children time, and the sermon. They have two programs they have been doing for over 12 years: Mother's Day and Father's Day bulletins. A special bulletin is made with names in memory and in honor and a vote is taken for the person who has been the best mother or father to the church. They are recognized as the "Mother of the Year" or "Father of the Year" with a plaque. The Jr. MYF group meets every other Sunday night for devotion, crafts, and fellowship.

Membership is 166 with an average attendance of 100.

A Youth Leader was hired for the summer of 2004 and it was a huge success. Plans are being made to hire someone again this summer.

We participated in a Lay Witness Weekend and Revival in February 2005 with the Second Mile Evangelistic Association and Rev. Carl Harris. We had this same event several years ago and we truly enjoy the fellowship and sharing with other Christians. After the weekend and Revival, we feel re-energized and ready to serve God and do His will.

New playground is on its way for the summer of 2005.

In 2005 we formed a Faith Vision Team to look at some short-term goals and a long-range plan for the future of our church. The following goals were approved by the Administrative Council:

Short-Term Goals

- ❖ Create an enhanced visitation program
- ❖ Provide a church orientation for members
- ❖ Expand our youth programs
- ❖ Establish a Sunday School Evangelism program
- ❖ Promote special services within the church

Long-Range Goals

- ❖ Attendance growth – increase to 200 by April 19, 2006
- ❖ Create a plan for the proper usage of church property
- ❖ Hire a part-time employee as an assistant to the pastor
- ❖ Work on being taken out of a "charge" and being placed in a "station" status, having our own full-time minister

In 2022, a new HVAC system and a new floor was installed in the Family Life Center with the majority of this cost being paid for by a generous donation from Floyd "Stump" and Linda Heatherly along with another anonymous donor.

Ministers at Bethlehem UMC, Union, SC:

Rev. W.A. Gourewell	1852-1853
Rev. A.H. Lester	1853-1854
Rev. William McSwain	1854
Rev. W.P. Mouzon and Rev. Landy Wood	1855
Rev. William Martin and Rev. Samuel Hill	1856
Rev. S.H. Brown and Rev. E.J. Gage	1857
Rev. William McSwain and Rev. H.D. Moore	1858
Rev. C. Murchison and Rev. A.W. Moore	1859
Rev. T.F. Barton	1860
Rev. J.H. Zimmerman and Rev. J.P. Depass	1861
No record	1862
Rev. H.A.C. Walker and Rev. S.A. Weber	1863
Rev. Walker and Rev. C Murshison	1864
Rev. O.A. Darby	1865
Rev. N.K. Melton	1865-1866
Rev. Alexander Hall	1867-1870
Rev. Max. Hoyle	1870
Rev. James F. Smith	1871-1872
Rev. J.B. Wilson	1873-1876
Rev. G.M. Boyd	1877-1878
Rev. J.C. Counts	1879-1880
Rev. J.R. McCain	1881
Church closed for lack of ministers	1882-1885
Rev. C.D. Rowell	1885-1887
Rev. D.P. Boyd	1888-1892
Rev. Dave Tiller	1892-1893
Rev. J.I. Porter	1894
Rev. B.W. Spiegrier	1895-1897
Rev. E.H. Beckon	1898-1899
Rev. David Hucks	1900

Since becoming part of the Kelton Charge, the following ministers have served: A.H. Best, George G. Farr, J.A. White, J.H. Manly, J.F. Gibson, F.E. Hoges, J.R. Copeland, W.C. Kelly, Jacob Golightly, W.A. Duckworth, R.L. Doggeet, J.W. Hoyle, and C.P. Carter.

Rev. N.M. Phillips	1928-1931
Rev. M.A. Cleckley	1932-1935
Rev. A.J. Bowling	1936-1937
Rev. C.W. Watson	1937-1940
Rev. W. Harold Smith	1940 (fill-in due to death of Watson)
Rev. Harry Chandler	1940-1943

Rev. Albert Harvey	1943-1946
Rev. George Hughes	1946-1949
Rev. Roy Owens	1949-1951
Rev. John Henry Wofford	1951-1954
Rev. A. E. Smith	1954-1956
Rev. John Mason Stapleton, Jr.	1956-1958
Rev. Alston Wilkes III	1958-1960
Rev. Robert Davenport	1960-1964
Rev. Richard Covington	1964-1966
Rev. Urban Pattilo	1966-1967
Rev. Roy Dickerson	1967-1971
Rev. Louis Adams	1971-1974
Rev. Herndon Shepherd	1974-1978
Rev. Brice B. Blakeney	1978-1987
Rev. Craig Douglas	1987-1988
Rev. Denver Lee	1988-1992
Rev. Larry R. Hyder	1992-1999
Rev. John M. Williams III	1999-2001
Rev. Keith D. Sweat	2001-2008
Rev. J. Christopher Greene	2008-2012
Rev. Glenn Ribelin, Sr.	2012-2016
Rev. Michael Walker	2016-2017
Rev. Lee Roper (Interim)	2018-2018
Rev. Dustin Madala	2018-2021
Rev. Lee V. Coyle	2021-

There have been five members from Bethlehem to become ministers – Carl Harris, Sam Knox, Emily Scales-Sutton, Mike Scale and Chad Ponder.

Active family names that are or have been on the church roll for many years are: Adams, Atkinson, Bentley, Bevis, Bolick, Bolton, Brewington, Buice, Carter, Cavender, Childers, Dalton, Eaves, Edwards, Elrod, Faucette, Fincher, Ford, Foster, Fowler, Freeman, Gallman, Garner, Gault, Gibbs, Glass, Hancock, Harris, Heatherly, Hodge, Holcombe, Horne, Howell, Inman, Kelly, Jackson, Johnson, Knox, Littlejohn, Lyles, Martin, McCraw, McFalls, McKeown, McNease, Moss, Moyer, Ochiltrie, Palmer, Ponder, Sanders, Scales, Smith, Southers, Stapleton, Stone, Taylor, Tweed, Vaughn, Vinson, Whitener and others.

Updated: May 11, 2023

Bethlehem United Methodist Church
1622 Kelly Road
Union, South Carolina 29379
864-427-1622
Rev. Keith Sweat
2001-2008

Bethlehem is a warm country church with a spiritual vision that is reaching the community. Enrollment of 160 with 100 active members may seem small in size but it is large with service and love for the Lord. The worship service is informal and open. The congregation is one big happy family. Prayer and Praise requests are spoken out during the service. Children attend the regular worship service with special children's sermons up front before the main sermon.

Bethlehem's roots go as far back as the early 1700's. Records show campground services and tangible proof that the site of Bethlehem Church Cemetery was used as early as 1825. People traveled to the services in wagon, horseback, or walked. Daniel and Lucie Gallman deeded the land on September 6, 1859. The first church building was a log cabin and the ministers in those days were circuit riders that rode horse back to their churches. Most circuit ministers preached many small churches. Bethlehem was a member of a 4 church circuit consisting of Bethlehem, Foster Chapel, Flat Rock and Mesopotamia. Bethlehem had church every other Sunday and alternating from morning to evening services. The first recorded minister was W. A. Gourewell in 1852.

In 1867 Alexander Hall, a black minister preached at Bethlehem and by 1870 more blacks were baptized at Bethlehem than whites. In 1882 the church was closed and re-opened in 1885. Records indicate the lack of ministers at that time. The original log cabin burned in 1914 and by 1915 the second church building was erected. In 1944 this church was torn down and during the reconstruction the church met in Mr. & Mrs. Miles S. Gallman's home. By late 1945 Bethlehem had a little white church with all its charm. Childhood memories can recall the white church sitting among the trees as the early morning fog rose and the church having a heavenly glow. The church was small so the piano sounded loud to a little girl and the music would rock the walls. I can remember leaving the church and not stop singing the hymns for hours. The old white church was torn down and we moved in to our present brick church in 1964.

Being a small church, funds were limited to our general needs: maintenance, education growth, and our pledge to missions. So in order to purchase a van, add a sound system, build a family life center and grow our outreach missions we were blessed with the idea to start our Second Sunday Dinners. Mr. A.G. Carter came up with the idea and Mr. & Mrs. Bobby Knox became the first co-chairperson for the dinners, which began in 1985 in the small social hall of our church with people sitting in classrooms to eat. We started out servicing approximately 50 people every second Sunday. With no direct advertising God blessed our attendance and it grew and grew. By the time our Family Life Center was completed in September 1986 we were busting at the seams. Our Second Sunday Dinners grew in attendance up to 500 at times. Not only were we servicing food but also we were servicing the Lord. Our dedication and love was viewed by all that came to eat. The Sunday Dinners were more than a place to go and eat. It was a place to visit with other Christians and bring back family values. Through our Second Sunday Dinners we completely paid for our Christian Life Center, our sound system, and a van. But more important we raised money for all types of missions: southwest drought, Florida hurricane victims, North Carolina hurricane victims, and Relay for Life cancer campaign, etc... We stopped servicing our Second Sunday Dinners in October of 2001 due to several families who had been active workers whose health problems and age kept them from helping any longer. However, there has been talk of starting them back up.

The church has been updated over the years. Mr. & Mrs. Floyd Heatherly nominated a beautiful gold cross that hangs in the choir loft in memory of their daughter, Melinda Kay, who died in a car accident in 1975. Mr. & Mrs. William Scales donated new chandelier lights that hang in our sanctuary in 1994. New carpet was installed this year. The church has a certain old charm about it they touches your heart and makes you feel comfortable.

As our membership and programs grew we need to expand more. A large wing was completed in 2002 to our church that added four large classrooms, library, and additional restrooms. Mrs. Barbara Gregory made a donation to the building fund in memory of her father, Mr. Fred Harris and the wing was dedicated to him. Fred was a long-standing memory of Bethlehem church.

The church has always been active in missions and discipleship programs for all ages:

- In 1957 the Women's Society of Christian Service was organized with Mrs. Guy Scales as the first president. Still active the Society now known as the United Methodist Women (UMW) work for missions here and abroad. They have obtained the United Methodist Conference Five Star Award _____ times for their contribution to several mission programs including the "World Thanks Offering". They prepared baskets for shut-ins on special occasions, raise funds to assist with local disasters and host special worship events throughout the year. In March they host the Sunday worship service to recognize "Woman's Day in the Pulpit" and a special service of "Prayer and Self-denial".
- The United Methodist Men (UMM)
- The Senior Adult class has a group called the "Goofers". They go on outings to different sites and out to eat. The group is a ball of fun. You can't stop laughing when you're on the van with them.
- Our Visitation and Missions committees visit members who are shut-ins, sick or in the hospital. They visit the unchurch in our community. Their services include aid to families in need, Christian education materials and worship service tapes are provided.
- Nursing Home Ministry brings scripture and music monthly to the lives of the people at the local nursing homes and retirement centers.
- Our children education program is very active. We have created leaders who have great Vacation Bible School programs, Easter Programs, Harvest events, Christmas Programs, and special singings.
- Our youth Sunday school classes foster discipleship early. They are taught books of the bible, the 12 disciples, bible classics, memorize bible verses, praise songs, and applied learning. They build Christian character, discipleship skills that teach them to interact in today's world as a Christian.
- Every Sunday before church we have a prayer group who meet and adds people to our prayer list and prays for those on the list.
- Our Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) program is broke down in to 4 separate groups: Senior High (Sr. MYF), Junior High (Jr. MYF), and Middle School (MIF), and our Elementary School (KIF).
 - The Sr. MYF group meets every Sunday night for devotion and fellowship. Their missions included The Soup Kitchen, Salkehatchie Summer Missions, **Co-partners with the Jr. MYF** - Christmas program for the Disable and Special Service people in Union County and praise and worship program for Department of Juvenile Justice (Teen Correction Facility). They attend many Youth Christian events: annual weekend "Spiritual Life Retreat", "Lifted" and "Light the Fire" praise and worship weekend. When they return from their trip, individuals will speak to the congregation or do a special presentation. They attend many Christian music concerts, "True Love Waits" events, Right Track Union County events, and host events of their own. Each year in May they lead one entire worship service including prayer, all music, children time, and the sermon. They have two programs they have been doing for 12 years: Mother's Day and Father's Day bulletins. A special bulletin is made with names in memory and in honor and a vote is taken for the person who has been the best mother or father to the church. They are recognizes as the "Mother of the Year" or "Father of the Year" with a plaque.
 - The Jr. MYF group meets every other Sunday night for devotion, crafts, and fellowship. Their missions are included with the Sr. MYF. During the 9/11 crises they sponsored a Firefighter from New York. They raised money and sent many cards, gifts, and funds. They visit the shut-ins regularly. Weekly they makeup prayer baskets that the children have written for someone on our prayer list. Throughout the year they recognize someone in the church that is doing something special in the church.
 - The MIF and KIF groups meet every other Sunday night for devotion and fellowship. Asbury Methodist camp is available each year for this group to attend.

Presently, our church has a sister church, Foster Chapel. We share one minister who preaches two sermons on Sunday morning. We do not have a regular Sunday worship service with a preacher. We have family

night, which includes a devotion lead by one of the members and a social hour where we eat dinner together. Bethlehem has worship service first starting at 9:45 a.m. – 10:45 with a 15 minutes social and Sunday school starting at 11:00. This seems odd but with this schedule we have a large percentage for Sunday school. Foster Chapel's schedule is just the reverse. We have a bible school class on Wednesday night for both churches lead by the minister.

Active families names that are or have been on the church roll for years: Adams, Atkinson, Bentley, Bolick, Bolton, Brewington, Carter, Cavender, Eaves, Elrod, Faucett, Fincher, Ford, Fowler, Gallman, Hancock, Harris, Heatherly, Holcombe, Horne, Howell, Inman, Kelly, Jackson, Johnson, Knox, Littlejohn, Lyles, McCraw, McNease, Moyer, Palmer, Ponder, Sanders, Scales, Smith, Taylor, Tweed, Vinson, Whitener.

Please come and worship with us.