The Brief History of Stephenson Memorial United Methodist Church—1923-1986

Covenant United Methodist Church, Greer

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The History of Stephenson Memorial United Methodist Church
The story of a faithful people

Before there was Covenant, there was Stephenson Memorial United Methodist Church located on Main Street, Taylors. The church actually started in 1923, and the first service was held in the upstairs of McAbee's Grocery Store with twelve charter members. But it was not until 1932 that the church was actually built. The church was named for R. J. Stephenson, Jr., who was General Manager of Southern Bleachery and Print Works. He was instrumental in convincing the mill to donate the land to build the church and pay the pastor’s salary as well as insurance on the church. There were now 88 members, and it was known as “the caring church”. The church continued to grow until the closing of the mill in 1966. As people moved away looking for jobs, attendance on Sunday morning had dropped to about 45 people by 1986.

Attendance may have dropped, but not the spirit in those remaining. The church could have decided to disband, hold fast to their location, or combine with another church, but the spirit of this small group heeded God’s call to reach out to the community. They resolved to let go of a dying church and start a new one. Acting on faith, they began to see the providential hand of God at work. The church was put up for sale and sold in a very short time. The last service was held July 27, 1986. Lee Road UMC offered the use of their gym for our services until the new church could be built. The Greenville District bought the site for a new church on Old Spartanburg Road and gave it to the congregation. The Conference sent a pastor who had experience in helping churches transition, Dr. Clarence Pittman. The members chose the name Covenant for their new church. By October 1986, there were 129 charter members. The first service at Covenant was a September morning 1987.

The sacrifices that were made by the Stephenson Memorial people gave birth to Covenant Church. They provided a model for our ministries and gave us a guide for the future … God’s faithful people caring for His people. Their spirit continues to ignite the spirit of those who enter Covenant today.

Today, there are about thirty-five members of Stephenson Memorial still attending Covenant. It is now another September morning - 2005, and it is our hope you will join your hearts with ours and catch our spirit as we gather to remember our faith journey and all those who have been a part of it and to feel once again that sense of awe at what God has done with a faithful people.

Judy Gallamore
Church Historian