The History of Covenant United Methodist Church

Covenant United Methodist Church, Greer

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Covenant United Methodist Church was organized on October 19, 1986. The founding session was held in the gymnasium of Lee Road United Methodist Church with 126 persons joining as charter members. Dr. C.O. Pittman was the founding pastor who gave leadership through 1992.

Site Development

Phase 1 Building--General Purpose
Groundbreaking for Phase 1 was November 23, 1986. The first service in the building was September 13, 1987. The facility includes a chapel, social hall, offices and classrooms. The congregation quickly outgrew the chapel and in March of 1988 began holding two Sunday morning worship services. Plans were made for the second building.

Phase 2 Building--Sanctuary
A Service of Consecration and Cornerstone Laying started phase 2 of the building. Construction on the Sanctuary began in January 1990. The first service was held September 23, 1990. Designed to seat 650, the worship area was originally supplied with a pew arrangement for seating 300. The remaining pews were purchased and installed in the summer of 1993.

Covenant House -- To alleviate the need for additional classroom space and to provide land for future growth, the church purchased the 2.23 acre tract and house adjoining the church property in October 1994. Volunteers have improved the site and enclosed the carport to create an additional classroom. This single-family house was later moved to a neighborhood in Taylors so that the church could expand its front parking lot.

Phase 3 -- Education and Family Life Center -- In March of 1993, the congregation determined additional facilities must be built to provide for needs and growth. A Building Committee was elected to develop plans for an Education and Family Life Center. Neal, Prince Architects were chosen to design the million-dollar facility. The building was completed in March of 1996. The Service of Consecration was held on April 14, 1996. This part of the facility provides ten classrooms, a social hall and kitchen, two offices, a gym and supportive facilities.

In the spring of 2001, a new seven-room Sunday school classroom building was added to the back of the gym. This addition was designed with removable walls, to allow for its eventual conversion to a youth facility.

Phase 4—Education Wing (600 Hallway) & Welcome Center—In 2010, Covenant expanded again to add classroom space for Adult Sunday School that had two Sunday School hours.

Phase 5—Purchase of Adjacent Property
Purchased three houses (204 Hammett Road, 210 Hammett Road, & 1308 Old Spartanburg
Road) that are next to existing main campus (1310 Old Spartanburg Road, Greer, South Carolina). Purchased three-acre tract to help with storm water requirements of the county and to eventually have an expansion road (exit road to Hammett Drive). The house at 210 Hammett Road is named the Pittman Ministry Center in honor of Rev. Dr. Clarence Pittman. The dedication service was in January 2015. The Pittman Ministry Center is used for small group Bible studies, Trail Life USA Troup SC-1227, and to provide refuge and sanctuary for missionaries on furlough.

Phase 6—Expansion of Sanctuary Seating, Children’s Education Building & Back Parking Lot Expansion

In the summer of 2018 leading into the spring of 2019, Covenant expanded sanctuary seating to include three large areas of the sanctuary that added three hundred forty-eight chairs. Then built a 18,000 square foot two story facility at the back of campus to accommodate the growing Covenant Christian Academy (weekday faith-based preschool) and the ever-growing CovKids ministry. Rooms were repurposed in the 600 hallway and the loft area of the gym to add office spaces, middle school rooms and expanded Sunday School spaces for larger class. A dedicated prayer room and library was a planned portion of the repurposed rooms.

Reflection presented to the 2016 Confirmation Class

By: Terry Tysinger, founding member of
Covenant United Methodist Church, Greer, SC

Chick Springs located in Taylors about five miles from Covenant. A community with a post office, grocery store, drug store, two doctors, a cotton gin, a bank, and a lumber yard. There was also a Silverleaf Dairy located right where the Silverleaf subdivision is today.

In the early 1920’s, Southern Bleachery (a cotton mill) was formed. They built a whole community with houses in which the workers could live and raise a family. They already had a Baptist Church which is Taylors First Baptist. They built another Baptist church on the mill hill called Southern Bleachery Baptist. There was a need for a Methodist Church. In 1923, a new Methodist Church was formed as Chick Springs Methodist Church. They met upstairs over an old store building.

They were twelve charter members. For nine years, the church members had a lot of hot dog suppers to raise money to build a new church. They also worked very hard to bring more people to join them and spread the Word of Jesus. In 1932, Southern Bleachery donated land and they built a new church building. They changed the name of the church to Stephenson Memorial Methodist Church. It was named after the General Manager of the Mill, R.J. Stephenson Jr. The Mill paid a portion of the pastor’s salary and paid the insurance on the building until the mill closed in 1966. There were 88-members at this time. People started moving away when the jobs left.

Maudie Smith is the only church member left in the church who attended in the old store building. Maudie never married but loves children and is a great witness of her faith in Jesus Christ. At age 90, she still drives herself to church every Sunday at the 11am service. J. P. Stevens bought the mill and starting making automobile carpet. I worked at the mill for a year.
before I went on active duty in the National Guard.

My dad, Rev. Joe Tysinger, became pastor of Stephenson Memorial in 1969 and was there until 1973. The church had a parsonage for the pastor and his family to live. I was seventeen when we moved there and just out of high school. This was the first house we lived in where I had my own bedroom. The congregation grew during this time where we were having 110+ people in worship on Sunday mornings. While my Dad served as pastor, air conditioning was added to the church. During this time, a faith seed was planted and he took several of the members out looking for a new site in the Pebble Creek area. Nothing developed from this. I did not find this out until three or four years ago. The 1973 church budget was $26,000.00 compare that to our budget of today which is more than two million dollars. My Dad’s salary was $7,500.00 a year.

In 1972, I married my wife, Joan. We became the youth leaders and continued until we sold the church in 1986. Needless to say with a church budget of $26,000.00 there was no youth budget. We had fund raisers all the time, rock-a-thons, spaghetti dinners, bake sales, Halloween carnivals, and donut sales all to raise money so we could go on youth retreats. We had the best Haunted House during this time! We used the whole second floor of the church where we had different stations set up. The ultimate was taking people down to the basement where the boiler room was and where “The Hook Man” lived. We took retreats mainly to Camp Greenville (YMCA Camp) and to the beach.

The church also continued to have fund raisers to raise funds for mission projects. The United Methodist Women would sponsor a Bazaar once a year. The whole church would get involved. United Methodist Men (UMM) had woodworking projects. The United Methodist Women (UMW) made quilts, bake goods, and crafts. These were big events for our church. The community looked forward to this time every year. The United Methodist Women was a driving force in the church.

Over the next few years, J.P. Stevens shut down and the church really started to decline. We were a close-knit family and we all tried to grow as a church. We did door-to-door evangelism. We had revivals sometimes twice a year. We did a lay witness mission where others came in and stayed at our homes for three days. What a spiritual blessing that was to so many of us! I remember one night at worship, we were at the altar and one of the lay people was praying over us. He said, “Fill them up, Lord.” And the Lord honored his request. We were filled with the Holy Spirit. What a blessing that was!

Our church always tried to take advantage of retreats to get away and worship together. We used to go to Springmaid Beach for the annual UMM Retreat. We would be well represented with the most in attendance a lot of the time. Another special event was the Laity Convocation at Lake Junaluska, N.C. What a spiritual blessing that was every year. At this point, we were down to about forty active people. We struggled to pay the bills and got to where we could not pay our fair share to the Conference which is called apportionments. A friend of mine who had gone out on my team doing door-to-door evangelism left to go to another church and tried to convince me and my family to go with him. He would say there is nothing here for your children (my children being some of the few children left). We struggled with this but did not want to leave what had become my Family (my church family).
We went on a retreat again to Lake Junaluska. A pastor named Rev Buskirk spoke at this event. During his message, he said, “If you have something that is dying don’t be afraid to let it die, but let the Lord lead you to where you should go.” We came home all energized! Soon after we began to talk about what God could have in store for us. I went to the Administrative Board meeting and made a motion that we sell our church and go where the Lord leads us. God was working! It was unbelievable but everyone voted yes. These were people who had been in that church since the beginning. Some being the only church they had ever known. They grew up as children in that place. So many memories. What a God thing!

When the Greenville District and Bishop heard what we were doing, they appointed Dr. Pittman to be our new Pastor as he had experience in declining mill churches. We had a church conference and the District Superintendent at that time tried his best one Sunday afternoon to get us to change our minds. But when we took the vote it was still unanimous. Then came the task of selling our church building. We thought it would be hard to sell. We had ten different organizations looking at the property. We sold the property to Community Baptist Church which is now located on Suber Road. I was elected Building Committee Chair. We started the process of figuring out how big we needed to be. Remember, they were just forty of us being led by God. We prayed and set our sights on being a 1000-member church. People said we were crazy! We designed a Master plan just as Covenant is going through the same today.

Covenant United Methodist Church was formed in 1986. We let everyone put a name for God’s new church in a bowl. Hazel Dillard had presented the name Covenant. With our church building sold, we started worshipping in Lee Road United Methodist Church’s gymnasium on July 27, 1986. We met there a little over a year as we built the first phase of our new building. We set up chairs in the gym every Sunday and we set them up in the fan shape that our pews are in today in our current sanctuary. The land was purchased by the Greenville District. We paid $120,000.00 for the 10-acres of land. We moved into our first building on Sept 13,1987.

Our first building was contracted for $450,000. Forty active people were left from Stephenson. The church grew to around 75+ while in the gym. What faith this group of people had and the banks had to have a lot of faith in us because we could not show them how we were able to pay them back. We continued on as we had before. We set up tents on the property and had a big Bazaar along with a BBQ and yard sale. This continued for several years. Everybody was working together for one purpose. We knew if we were going to continue to try to reach people, we were going to have to build again pretty quickly. Our main goal was to reach people for Christ!

In our little chapel, we grew to two services very quickly. Every social event like our Youth Steak Out, children’s plays, and youth programs, we had to do multiple times. The last Sunday that we met in the chapel before moving into the sanctuary, we had 160 people at the 11am service. We never missed a payment to the bank and God blessed us for our faithfulness and continues to bless us to this very day as we let Pastor Darren lead us as God’s Spirit will have us go.

You will soon be full members of Covenant United Methodist Church. You will have an
awesome opportunity to continue in the path that God has laid out for you. When you go on a retreat or go to youth group, don’t just go to have a good time but go and listen for God to speak to you. You will be surprised at what He can do through you.

**Appointed United Methodist Senior Pastors Who Served Covenant**

Rev. Dr. Clarence Pittman (Founding Pastor) | Served 1986 till 1992
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Rev. Darren Hook | Serving 2007 to Present

**Appointed United Methodist Associate Pastors Who Served Covenant**

Rev. Stephen Street, Associate Pastor | Served 1994 till 2002
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Rev. Stacey Hansen, Associate Pastor | Served 2002 till 2005
Rev. Pete Berntson, Associate Pastor | Served 2004 till 2007
Rev. Charles Summey, Associate Pastor | Served 2007 till 2009
Rev. Linda Guthrie, Associate Pastor | Served 2009 till 2018
Rev. Gryff Carosiello, Discipleship Pastor | Served 2016 till 2019
Rev. Michael Hammett, Nurture Pastor | Served 2018 till 2020
Rev. Matt Yon, Executive Pastor | Serving 2018 to Present
Rev. Janice Hughey, Senior Adults, Missions & Women’s Ministry Pastor | Serving 2019 to Present
Rev. Laura Geloni, Assimilation Pastor | Serving 2022 to Present