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Bethel Ruffin History

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*200th Year
Anniversary
Celebration*

April 14, 2024
Bethel United Methodist Church
Ruffin, SC

Origins of a Brush Arbor



Bethel, one of the oldest historic churches in Colleton County, has seen many changes since it began as a Brush Arbor (referred to as Brush or Bush) in the late 1700's. An American Heritage that has always been cherished is the right of religious freedom. When people in communities wanted a place to worship together, trees and brush were used to build a temporary shelter, protecting them from harsh sunlight and rainfall.

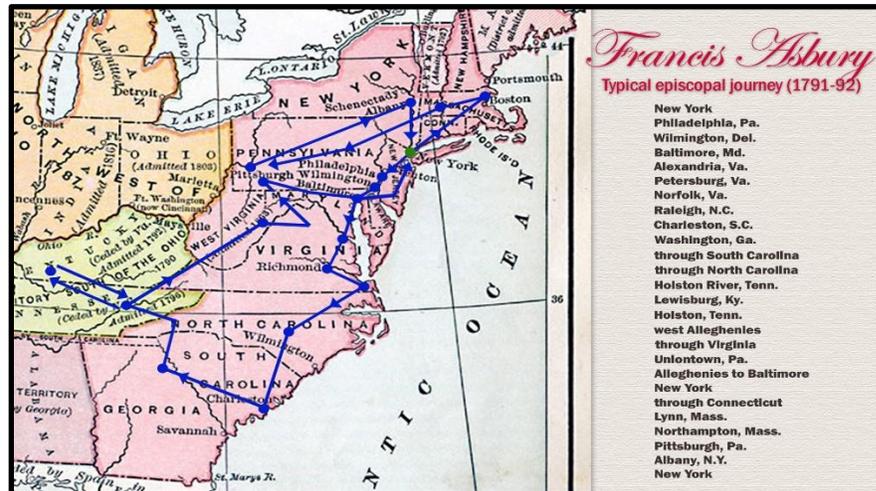
When the circuit rider preacher passed by, many families and groups of friends came in wagons or by horseback to hear the preaching. Francis Asbury, the first American Methodist Bishop, made a stop at Bethel and preached under the Brush Arbor.

By: Athelda Preacher Dunn

FRANCIS ASBURY

THE CIRCUIT RIDING PREACHER

The story and biography of Francis Asbury is very interesting and intriguing. Did you know a former Bethel UMC member, church treasurer, and school teacher, Mrs. Mildred Ulmer, did some research and discovered Francis Asbury made a stop at Bethel? It is believed he preached on the south side of our current church.



Francis Asbury, born August 20, 1745, was a committed believer who went above and beyond his call for the cause of Christ. He learned to read the Bible by age 7 and then dropped out of formal education at 12. He started the first Sunday School in North America in Hanover County, Virginia.

He was not an eloquent speaker and his sermons, at times, were hard to follow. Asbury rarely owned much more than he could carry on horseback and fought to keep the wages of Methodist ministers low. He believed poverty kept him honest. He was relentless in his quest to spread scriptural holiness to North America. He rode over 130,000 miles on horseback. He spent most of his days on horseback and nights as a house guest. He lived his life with little privacy or time out of the public eye.

Throughout his ministry, he tore down walls of separation and made places for men and women, regardless of race or social standing. He was 26 when he answered the call from John Wesley to come to North America as a missionary. When he arrived in 1771, the Methodists were a small group. Through his incredible dedication that led to preaching over 10,000 sermons and ordaining 2,000 preachers, those ranks have increased to over 200,000 people in North America. Under his leadership, the Methodist Church in America grew from 1,200 people to 214,000 members by the time he died March 31, 1816.

History of Bethel United Methodist Church

**16147 Low Country Highway
Ruffin, South Carolina**

1824-2024

Bethel United Methodist Church is one of the oldest churches in Colleton County still holding regular services. Bethel is located in what was known as Bartholomew's Parish in Colleton County, on Low Country Highway (Hwy 21) about halfway between Bells Crossroads and Sniders Crossroads.

In compiling the history for Bethel United Methodist Church, Ruffin, SC, we find that Bishop Frances Asbury (first American Methodist Bishop) visited and preached here in a Brush Arbor, (1700 to 1800's) preaching to the small communities like Bethel, spreading God's word and starting the foundation of our church, Bethel. (The late Asbury M. Preacher, who was a member of Bethel at the time, says that services were held before December 24, 1824).

December 24, 1824, Jesse Goodman and his wife, Zelfhia, "sold" for \$1.00, one acre of land on which Bethel Church now stands. The first papers were witnessed by Edward Bryan and Samuel Carter.

The Brush Arbor was replaced by a log house built by the early settlers. A few years later, a hewn log building was built. It was replaced with the first church which was a frame building constructed by Perry McMillan in 1886. In December of 1933 some trash was being burned in the yard, a spark fell on the roof and the building was destroyed. A new frame structure was built which is our present building and it was bricked in 1975.

There are many forbearers dating back to the 18th Century whose marked graves can be found in the present church cemetery near to the site of the original brush arbor. Unmarked is the grave of the first person to be buried in the original acre of land given to the church. It was a child who had wandered into the swamp and drowned while her parents were working in a nearby field.

On March 5, 1903, one and three quarters of land was sold to the Trustee's of Bethel Church and Hendersonville Circuit by M.S. Bailey, M.E. Bailey and E.J. Bailey. The said premises were to be held and maintained and kept as a place of burial. March 17, 1903, Effie J. Bailey sold one quarter acre to be used as a cemetery.

Through the years, special services honoring many occasions, donations and gifts have been given to Bethel. Many of these traditions, gifts and contributions remain and are still in use today.

CHRONOLOGICAL INFORMATION

1878: J.D. (Uncle Jimmie) Hudson started year-round Sunday School.

1900-1950s

- 1900: The first organ, one of the old fashioned "Pump" variety, was placed in the church. This was followed by a piano in 1925 and an electric organ in 1952.
- 1918: The first young people's organization called the "Epworth League" was formed by Rev. G.L. Rhoad. Mrs. Blanche B. Hudson was the first president. Through the years the name was changed to the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF).
- 1922: Sept. 14: R.M. Jefferies exchanged one and one half acres for one acre across the road.
- 1933: The Bethel Women's Society organized a quilt making project to raise money after the church burned. The quilt was framed and now hangs in the Vestibule.
- 1934: The new church was completed.
- 1944: F.B. Breland donated an Electrical organ and chimes in honor of his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Breland.
- 1948: During the summer, the first Vacation Bible School was organized.
- 1949: July 25-July 31: The Bible School had about 85 children enrolled.
February: New pine pews were installed.
- 1950: Asbestos siding was installed on the exterior walls. The vestibule was also built and electricity was added.
- 1952: Jan. 25: The Men's Club was organized. G.A. Mills was the first president. Church marker placed in front of church by the Men's Club.
- 1959: April 26: Brass ware was placed in the Altar by the Women's Society. Bulletin board made and presented by Albert Benton.

1960-1990s

- 1964: Lonnie C. Breland donated three acres for cemetery purposes.
- 1968: Bethel joined the United Methodist Church.
- 1971: 233 on Membership roll.
- 1973: Members age 65 and up were honored with a "Golden Age Banquet".
- 1974: A new district was formed in Walterboro, SC. The Rev. Peden Curry will have 99 churches under his charge. Another Golden Age Banquet was held for the members age 65 and up. Bethel UMC held church dedication celebrating **150 years** on Sunday, October 27th.
- 1978: May 10: The most dramatic addition to the church was the 30 foot high steeple surmounted by a cross which was set in place. The steeple is aluminum covered with white baked on enamel.
- 1979: June 24: A large wooden cross was mounted on the wall behind the pulpit. It was donated by the children of Mrs. Blanche B. Hudson.
- 1981: The Old Field Creek Cemetery was restored and February 14th, given to Bethel United Methodist Church by Gibson Howard Bryan and Evelyn McDaniel Bryan.

- 1984: The Bethel ladies and children met at the Community House for several weeks to make Chrismons for our first Chrismon Tree. Everyone from the oldest to youngest enjoyed being a part of a tradition: cutting, gluing, and decorating ornaments. Many memories were made and the trees have been decorated with those ornaments for the last 39 years.
- 1995: Stained glass windows in the Sanctuary and front Sunday School windows were installed. Donations from church members, families and friends funded this project. Homecoming and window dedication was held December 10, 1995. Stained glass pulpit design was donated in memory of James Atticus and Yonah Ulmer Hudson Family, by the Hudson Families. The wooden cross donated in 1979 was placed in the center of the stained-glass design. The cross was in memory of Blanche B. Hudson by Willie Mae Crosby, Janie Murdaugh and children of the deceased son Heyward Hudson. (see page 14)
- 1996: Bethel helped a needy family: furnish a mobile home, installed water well, septic tank and electricity. God gave us overflowing blessings. Bethel opened their first CD for \$10,000.00, May 10, 1996.
- 1997: Protective guards were installed over the rear Sunday school windows. A microphone was purchased for the Pastor.
- 1998: Nov. 1: All Saints Day was celebrated with an evening memorial service. Luminaries lined the parking lot and driveway. At the conclusion of the service, names of departed loved ones were read aloud, the luminaries were lit and together everyone sang, Blest Be the Tie That Binds. Donations to have a luminary lit in memory of a loved one was put in a fund to help build a new fellowship hall.
- 1999: Ms. Crystal B. Hudson gave a generous donation of \$100,000.00 to build a new Fellowship Hall next to the church. Hudson Hall was named in her honor.

2000s-Present

- 2000: Inside of church building was freshened up with new paint.
- 2001: Senior's Night Banquet: "The Womanless Wedding".
- 2003: Installed PA System; large donation in honor of Dorothy Hudson Baker given by Ben and Frankie J. Hudson Evans. Senior's Night Banquet: "The Ed Sullivan Show".
- 2005: Caring and Sharing Circle began.
- 2006: Salkehatchie Youth Ministry began.
- 2007: Wooden front porch columns were replaced by four fiberglass columns by the Trustees, including: L.C. Breland, Keith Ulmer, Tim Jones, Ben Evans, James Bryan and others. New digital piano/organ donated by Keith, Mildred and Jan Ulmer. It was given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Mrs. Bridie Marie Breland Ulmer.
- 2008: Bethel contributed \$10,995.75 to Water's Edge UMC on Lady's Island SC, as part of the Christmas Miracle Special.
- 2009: The Quilt that was made to raise money to rebuild the church after it burned in 1933 was repaired, framed and hung in the church vestibule. Mr. Gene Mills, son of the late Albert and Kathryn Mills, donated the funds for this project. The table in the vestibule was donated in memory of Clarence and Dorothy Thomas by their family.

2010: Increased our donation to Epworth Children's Home to \$4,000.00 annually. This is in addition to Epworth's Mother's Day and Epworth Work Day offerings.

2011: New gray carpeting was installed in Sunday School Rooms. Altar rail repaired and refinished.

2012: May: Video equipment was added to the sound system. Noah's Ark Children's playground installed behind social hall.

2013: New Bibles were donated to Bethel.

2015: The first Ladies Spring Tea was held. Ladies from the three churches on the charge were invited, as well as friends and family. This continued through 2019. Twelve new round tables were donated to Hudson Hall by Mrs. Joyce Gooding. A new District Superintendent, Rev. Joey McDonald, was assigned to Walterboro District.

2017: New roof installed on church.

2020: Due to Covid and for everyone's safety, the "Tea" was discontinued. January: the ladies of Bethel gathered to repair original Chrismons that were made in 1984 as well as make new ones. Sound system was upgraded with casting equipment.

2022: Church restrooms upgraded. New concrete and brick handicap ramp installed.

2023: Lydia Fisk, Bethel's oldest member passed away December 20, 2023, at the age of 102.

2024: It's hard to believe we are already in the second quarter of year 2024. So many changes have taken place in the Methodist Church in 200 years. Recently the controversy has resulted in churches voting to leave the UMC Conference. The Ruffin Charge, (including Bethel), has decided to join others voting to disaffiliate from UMC. In spite of the changes and challenges over the past two hundred plus years, God has richly blessed our community and congregation. We look forward to the future with excitement and with the assurance of God's continued guidance.



Chrismons



Hudson Hall

Old Field Creek Cemetery

The Oldefield Family owned the land recorded between John Oldefield and Maunmet Dubose July 4, 1730. Rev. Richard Bryan (born April 30, 1759 - died March 1826), is buried at the Old Field Creek Cemetery. At that time his son, Edward Bryan, owned the land. Also buried in the cemetery are: John and Mahala Smyly Bell - for whom Bells Crossroads is named. Names of others buried there include: Breland, Thomas, Buchanan, Crosby, Walling, Dewitt and Stephens, Lot "D" of the cemetery is reserved for the H. D. Dantzler Family.

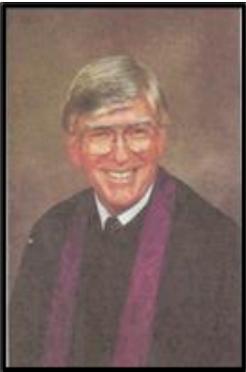
BETHEL PASTORS SERVING (1759-2024)

RECORDS SHOW: Rev. Richard Bryan was the earliest Pastor serving Bethel 1759-1826. He married a lady in the Ulmer Family and moved to Alabama. Henry Ulmer, Jr. assumed the appointment, followed by: Rev. Kistler, Dr. Basil Jones, Rev. Thomas Raysor, Rev. F.W. Walker, Rev. Landy Wood, Rev. Crider, Rev. Charles Wilson, Rev. Welbourne D. Kirkland, Rev. O.N. Roundtree, Rev. ("War Horse") Bellenger, Rev. Carson Young, Local James Givens, Local Louis Hudson, and Local Boswell Ulmer (dates unavailable for some)

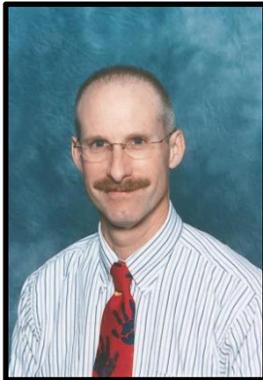
Rev. David Hucks	1897	
Rev. Edward Palmer Hudson	1902	
Rev. W.H. Thrower	1905-1906	
Rev. J.R.Copeland	1907	
Rev. C.W. Burgess	1908	
Olan L. Durant	1909-1910	Rev. Durant became ill or died.
Local Rev. Paul K. Crosby	8-23-1913	Began as local pastor and licensed 8-23-1913.
Local Bryan McKinley Crosby	3-21-1914	Crosby began as a local pastor, earned license 3-21-1914.
Rev. J.O. Burnett	1914	
Rev. J.D. Bell	1915-1916	
Rev. G.L. Ingram	1917	
Rev. D.H. Everett		
Rev. R.P. Hucks	1934	
Rev. G.C. Gardner		
Rev. G.T. Rhoad		
Rev. W.M. Mitchum		
Rev. J.B. Prosse	1939	
Rev. W.E. Sanders		
Rev. E.F. Scoggins		
Rev. T.W. Williams		
Rev. J.W. Cook		
Rev. Paul Wood		
Rev. B.S. Hughes	1947	
Rev. W.R. Parker	1947-1952	
Rev. J.C. Inabinet	1952-1956	
Rev. G.R. Cooper	1956-1959	
Rev. B.R. Tyler	1959-1961	
Rev. E.S. Finklea	1961-1965	
Rev. Roy Butler	1965-1970	1 st pastor to live in new brick parsonage built at Bells.
Rev. Grady Newman	1970-1971	
Rev. Dewey Dean	1971-1974	Was pastor when Bethel celebrated their 150 th anniversary.
Rev. Jerry Phillips	1974-1980	His son, Lee Phillips became a UMC pastor and he married Vicky Ulmer, a member at Tabor UMC.
Rev. L.O. Foxworth	1980-1983	
Rev. David Cox (then retired)	1983-1991	
Rev. Michael Baughman	1991-1993	
Rev. Lowry Drennen	1993-1995	
Rev. Carolyn W. Malphrus	1995	First lady Pastor on Ruffin Charge. Due to illness she had to step down.
Rev. David Cox	1995-1997	Came out of retirement and finished her term
Rev. Edward J. Stiltz	1997-2001	
Rev. Tom Lewis	2001-2006	
Rev. James A. Grubb	2006-2010	
Rev. Wayne Major Sr.	2010-2015	
Pastor Cheri Yates	2015-2021	
Pastor Larry Stocker	2021-2023	
Pastor Nelson Keith Yates	2023-Current	

PASTORS OF THE RUFFIN CHARGE

**PHOTOS AVAILABLE
(1983-2024)**



David W. Cox



Lowry Drennen



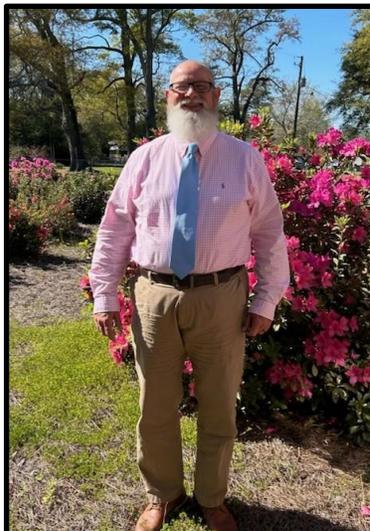
Carolyn Malphrus



Edward J. Stiltz



James A. Grubb



Nelson Keith Yates

Current Pastor and has been with the Ruffin Charge since July 2023



Wayne Major Sr.



Cheri Yates



George Palmer Hudson

and his family have been lifelong members of the Bethel Community. George began coming to Bethel Church with Kerensky and Virginia Benton. He served six years active duty in the Navy, then reserves. He earned his education degree, taught school and became a Lay Servant. In 2015, he accepted an appointment and served five years in Allendale and three years in Dorchester. Currently he is at Goose Creek UMC, Goose Creek, SC, serving as Licensed Local Pastor for one year.

Bethel School in the Early 1900's



This is the Bethel School that some of the Preacher Family attended. It is located across the street from Bethel Methodist Church, on Hwy 21 in Ruffin, Colleton County, SC. It was the grammar school of 1st through the 8th grades.

Bethel School

The Community House



Across Hwy 21 (Lowcountry Hwy) in front of Bethel Church is a small white building that once was a school but is known to many as the Community House. If only those bead board walls could talk!

Not only was it used for church activities, it was the meeting place for countless community events, meetings, and social activities. It was used for Women's Society Meetings, Bible School, Sunday School, MYF, seasonal and birthday parties, wedding & anniversary receptions, as well as baby & bridal showers. Lots and lots of delicious food has been prepared and enjoyed there. After all these years, the building still stands proud as we remember the good times and special memories we hold in our hearts.

Skilled Craftsmen

Bethel has been very fortunate to have skilled and talented craftsmen over the years. Some of their work includes: the old Secretary Desk located behind the cross, the small flower table, toy box in nursery, tables in the Sunday School Rooms, the wooden cross on the front lawn and the cabinetry made by Mr. Billy Breland in the Choir Room and the cabinets made in the sound room and fellowship hall by Tim Jones. Mr. James & Mrs. Cathy Bryan were instrumental during the addition of Hudson Hall. Cathy served as a Trustee during this time and created a photo album timeline as it was built. She helped with the quilt project and they both were a part of the stained glass window additions.

In the 1960's during Bible School, when the lessons were finished, it was time for arts and crafts. The older children would adjourn to the Community House, across the road. Through the skills and talents of Mr. Merrill Givens, who would cut pieces of wood at home and bring them to church, the teenagers would nail, glue and create stools and tables for their family. The podiums, which are still in use at Bethel today, were created and made during Bible School. We have been blessed to have other dedicated and skilled men who have cared for the church through the years: L.C. Breland, Chalmers Preacher, Howard Preacher, Kerensky Benton, Ben Evans, Keith Ulmer, James Bryan and many others.



Original Church Register



Furnishings



James David Hudson Sunday School Superintendent 1881-1935 Pulpit Plaque



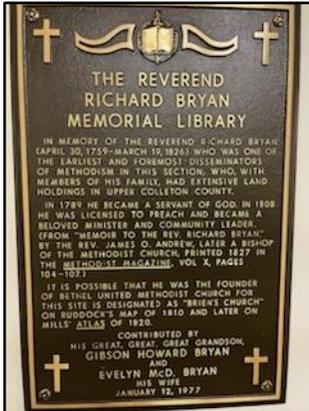
Atticus, son of James David Hudson, took over as Sunday School Superintendent and he served for many years. Joyce Gooding was Sunday School Superintendent after Atticus Hudson.

Richard Franklin Bryan II January 12, 1978

Enoch Ulmer Adult Class Leaders: Enoch Henry Ulmer, Bobby Dunn

Antique Sunday School Desk

Podiums



Jacob Franklin Bryan II June 11, 1978

In 1977, a generous gift of \$25,000.00 was presented to Bethel by Howard Bryan, former member of Bethel and in memory of his father, Jacob L. Bryan. This donation along with other contributions started a remodeling project in early spring, which included the old ceiling removed and ceiling tiles installed, wall to wall carpet installed throughout the church and Sunday School Rooms. Friends and family donated the new oak pews with red cushions, in memory of loved ones, replacing former pine pews. The pine altar rail replaced by one of polished oak. The Sunday School Rooms were paneled and two rooms converted into a library. An Oak Baptismal Font was given in honor of Mrs. Lydia Foster Breland.

Very old desk, age unknown, in the Sunday School area. The unique hinges confirm old age.

Podiums were built at Bible School in the 50's. Wood was cut by Merrill Givens and assembled and stained by Bible School children. Alisha Givens was very active in Bible School and teaching Sunday School.



The Sound of Music

Over the years we have been privileged to have members who contributed their talents as vocalist, organist and pianist to our services.

Some of those talented individuals are:

Mr. Enoch "Nick" Ulmer, Blanche Hudson, Mrs. Virginia Benton, Mr. Paul Ulmer, Frankie Jo Evans, Donna Hudson Terry, Cornelia Ulmer Mills, LaDean Nettles Drawdy, June Hudson, Mrs. Evelyn Fowler, George Hudson and our current vocalist and pianist, Jan Ulmer.

Several ministers have also provided us with vocals, playing piano and guitar.

They are: Rev. David Cox, Rev. Ed Stiltz, Rev. Wayne Major Sr. and the current Pastor Nelson Keith Yates.

Sound System & Video



Bethel was very fortunate to have many members that have worked to provide good sound in the sanctuary. Those talented individuals began making DVD's for shut in members and now we are fortunate, through their knowledge, to provide live services to all who are unable to attend in person.

We remember Ted Donnelly, one of the first to monitor the sound. Now special thank you for those who have dedicated their time and those that continue to use their service and talents: Jim Benton and Tim Jones for installing the sanctuary monitors and wiring, and Sound System Operators: Jim Benton, Edgar and Michelle Grinberg, Matthew Bryan, Harley Hiott and Zach O'Quinn.

Renovations included parking lots and extensive landscaping.



Noah's Ark



We would like to thank **Mrs. Betty Breland** for her Christmas tradition of handcrafting canvas Christmas ornaments. She has made a different Christmas ornament for about thirty years and shares them each year with our church family.



Window Dedication Service

December 10, 1995

**The Stained Glass Windows were placed in the
Sanctuary and Sunday School Rooms by
Contributions of Family and Friends in Memory of:**

(not all pictured here)

Floyd & Bessie Darby and John & Eliza Ulmer

Jeffrey Scott Robinson

Eddie Edwards (Ed) Breland

David N. Givens & Rosa B. Givens

Dr. Willis & Verna Hudson

J. Lester & Julia B. Preacher

Mr. & Mrs. Lee Givens, Marion Givens, Elise Givens Trippe
and Merrill Givens

Katheryn Givens Mills

M. Howell Breland

Billy & Naomi Whetzel

Dan & Ruby Breland

Lonnie C. & Viola B. Breland

Joe & Elizabeth Bryan and Clevie Fisk

Ruth Givens Hudson Busch and William Royden Hudson, Sr.

Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Bryan and Ella Benton

James David Hudson, Sunday School Superintendent 1881-1935
and Mary Ellen Hudson

Ben & Bridie Ulmer

Edward P. (Eddie) Hudson and Bessie B. Hudson and James W. Crosby

Mr. & Mrs. D.L. Herndon

W. Dan & Ruby Breland

Travis Givens

Wayne Crosby

Bill Fowler

Walter B. Breland and Janie Nettles Breland

William Dan Breland, Jr.

David Wyman Fender and Lula Preacher and Buna Elisa Fender

Kerensky & Virginia Benton's Parents

C.K. Breland, Jr.

James Atticus & Yonah Ulmer Hudson, Dorothy Hudson Baker &
George Tyndall Baker

James Atticus & Yonah Ulmer Hudson

Ted & Betty Jean Donnelly's Parents and in Honor of Their Grandchildren

Ed Breland

Helen B. Ulmer

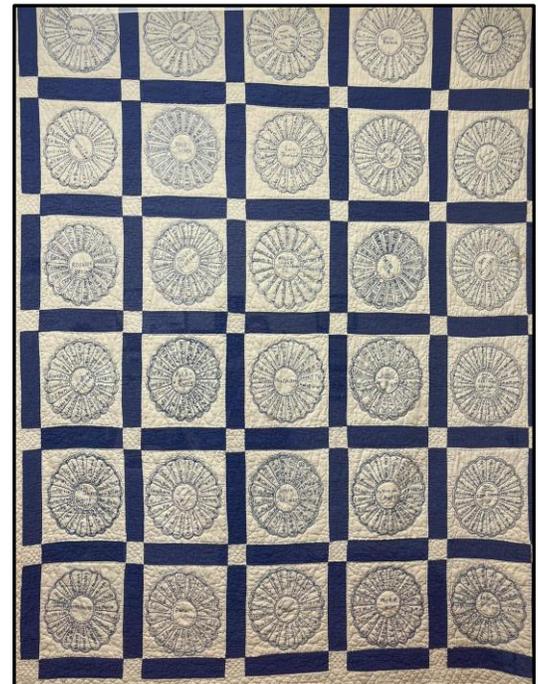




The Quilt

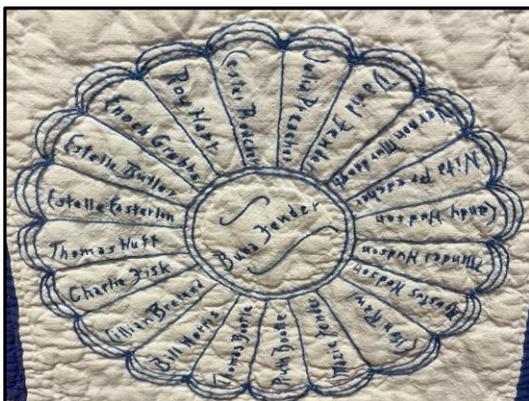
In 1933, Bethel Methodist Church burned with little left behind. Almost immediately, its members were called to task. The church had to be rebuilt and to the credit of our forbearers, the church was reconstructed at about one year later, in 1934.

The ladies of the Bethel Women's Society rose to the occasion. They organized a quilt-making project that would engage families, friends and other communities. A square of the quilt contained a wheel with spokes and a hub. Donations of 10 cents would get a person's name embroidered on a spoke and 25 cents would get a name embroidered in the center or hub of the wheel. Once the individual squares were finished, the ladies of the society would meet at various homes to complete the job. The quilt frame was hung from the ceiling. The bottom, the batting and the top squares were fitted and pegged into the frame. The ladies with thimbles, needles and thread in hand or in apron pocket, would sit around the quilt and sew and chat.



After weeks of work, the quilt was completed and the dimes and quarters were counted (approximately \$67.50), but there was no feeling of satisfaction. A little more money was needed to make the job complete; besides in addition, the quilt needed a home. A hometown boy, Dr. Willis Hudson, from Detroit, Michigan, happened to get word of this nice warm quilt and decided that it was just what he and his family needed to stay warm in Detroit's cold winter weather.

The Dr. Willis Hudson Family kept this quilt from 1934 until 1999 when Crystal, his daughter, died and left the quilt as part of her estate. Mrs. Louise Crosby, a longtime Women's Society Member, remembered hearing her mother and others talk about the quilt. Mrs. Louise quickly retrieved the quilt from the estate and returned it to the Bethel United Methodist Church Council.



Bethel United Methodist Church Council recognized the significance of the quilt upon viewing many of their family names. The connection was made, the quilt was home, and the church must preserve it for posterity. What a joyful homecoming!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to everyone for their help in the production of this book. Thanks to Carolyn Breland, Frankie Jo Evans, Jim Benton and Athelda Dunn for researching the history of Bethel Church and gathering all the information. Thank you to Tammy Polk for the beautiful painting of our church on the front cover. Thank you to Kelley Sral who designed and made the invitation. Thank you to Melissa O'Quinn for her help in creating the history of our beloved church.

Thank You

Bethel has continued through the years to be a loving and caring church who has held their faith in the one God, Jesus Christ, ruler of us all. Celebrate with us the two hundred years of blessings overflowing!



And ALL God's People said "AMEN"

Disclaimer: Bethel United Methodist Church or any contributors of this booklet, assume no guarantee, completeness, responsibility, liability, errors or omissions, or accuracy for the contents. The information contained provided, was obtained from church history, family history and county records.