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### Mount Lebanon Church History

Mount Lebanon United Methodist Church, Greenwood

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Early records of Mt. Lebanon Methodist Church have been lost but a history of the church, written by Rev. W. A. Betts (pastor of the charge) in 1897 stated that the church had its beginning "about 1835". A portion of Mr. Betts' history follows:

"In 1845 the officers of Mt. Lebanon Church were George Holloway, Martin Hacket and Stephen Ross. The church had been built about ten years previously. The land on which the church was built was given by a Mr. Shakleford who was the father of Bishop Wightman's first wife. After George Holloway died, Major Thomas Nichols bought his plantation, located near Lebanon Church, and transferred his membership from Salem to Lebanon, where he was made class-leader and Superintendent of the Sunday School. The church was at that time in flourishing condition. Upon the death of Brother Nichols, the offices of the church so worthily filled were put upon Thos. C. Lipscomb, which position he occupied until the opening of the Civil War. During the war, Dr. W. L. Anderson was Superintendent of the Sunday School and T. L. Coleman, class leader. Subsequent to the War, Thos. C. Lipscomb filled both offices until the year 1877. Upon the shoulders of J. W. Lipscomb those responsibilities rested when T. C. Lipscomb departed and right worthily were they discharged by this lover of his Lord and of Methodism. He is yet a standard-bearer in the church of his heart's delight."

In a history of Greenwood, written in 1901, C. M. Calhoun states that there were no organized churches in the village of Greenwood until the Civil War. The Baptists (citizens) worshipped at Mt. Moriah, Presbyterians at The Rock and the Methodists at Mt. Lebanon. "Some old residents never did sever their connections with Lebanon".

George Holloway and his wife, Rebecca, mentioned in Mr. Betts' history owned the present L. B. Aull plantation. They were liberal supporters of Methodist institutions, particularly Cokesbury Conference School. By an act of Annual Conference in 1918, their graves were moved from the original burying ground on the plantation to Lebanon Cemetery and a marker erected "in appreciation" by the Conference. The graves and marker are directly in front of the present church.

The present building is the second church building at Mt. Lebanon. The first building stood near to, but not exactly on the site of the present building. It faced in the opposite direction from the present building, fronting upon the old public road from Ninety Six to Greenwood. The Greenville and Columbia Railroad, which later became a branch of the Southern Railway, was constructed in the early 1850's. After the railroad was constructed the public road was established beside the railroad, between the church and the railroad. When the present church building was constructed in 1904, it was made to face toward the public road, with the result that the cemetery is now in front of the church, whereas, in the early period it was to the rear of the building.

An interesting recollection of the physical appearance of the first Mt. Lebanon was written by Lewis Anderson Roberts when he was a Senior at the Citadel in 1903. in part, it reads:

"Living in the midst of a fashionable city, and surrounded by its reserved manners, I find my mind often wandering back to the simple scenes of early boyhood. Important among these mental pictures is an old country church. It stands near a much-traveled highway, in a grove of large oaks. How well do I remember my last visit there; it was on the closing day of a protracted meeting. I can almost feel the refreshing breeze which cooled my face, as we rode within the shaded grounds, from the hot, dusty road. What a suitable place for a house of God; it seemed as though nature had so designed it. We hitched our horse to a spreading elm, and walked towards the church. Scattered about the grounds were vehicles of all kinds; there could be seen a few comfortable new carriages, but a greater number of two-horse wagons, containing from six to ten split-bottomed chairs. A long, rough plank table stretched itself between two large shade trees, bearing already the weight of several baskets. From the table we turned to the church itself, a rectangular, wooden building. Though the material was perfectly sound, its style of architecture - its small windows, enclosed by green blinds, its black shingled roof, unadorned with cross or steeple was sufficient proof that as many as three generations had worshiped at its altar. And the appearance of the interior did not tend to change this impression. Like the outside, it was painted white. The old-fashioned benches were arranged with an aisle running up the center from an end door, another at right angles to this, joining two other doors, one on each side. The pulpit occupied the greater part of one end, while on one side, the eye caught sight of a plain church organ."

Mt. Lebanon had a large number of negro members and a "large class of slaves was taught by Thomas Lipscomb Coleman". Mr. T. C. Anderson (born 1868), states that some of the older negroes continued to attend the church "after the war" and he remembers seeing some of them take communion.

The Sunday School Superintendents following J. W. Lipscomb were W. H. Whitlock, M. H. Coleman, W. L. Anderson, Jr., and T. C. Anderson, who retired in 1953 at the age of 85. E. W. Godfrey followed him and retired in 1970. W. T. Etheridge is the present Superintendent.

It is known that a Woman's Missionary Society was in existence at Mt. Lebanon as early as 1850. A certificate of Life Membership issued to Mrs. E. B. Nichols for the required sum of twenty-five dollars, paid by the members, is dated 1854, and is in the possession of the present Society. Mrs. M. H. Coleman was the president of the Society for many years. At her death Mrs. J. W. Lipscomb, became the President. The two church circles are named "Ella Coleman" and "Lula Lipscomb" in honor of these two consecrated women.

Another long term office holder was the late T. L. Coleman, who for more than thirty years was Sunday School Secretary and Secretary of the Quarterly Conference.

For many years Children's Day was an important occasion in the church life. The children wore their best clothes and gave recitations, sang songs and chanted portions of scripture which they had memorized.

In the summer when crops were laid by there was always a "protracted meeting." There were no lights in the church, so services were held morning and afternoon and at noon there was "dinner on the ground."

Church finances were another matter worth mentioning. At a Stewards' meeting at the beginning of the year an assessment or estimate was made of what each member was expected to pay. Then the Stewards (about four, usually) divided the membership and visited to collect "quarterage" for the preacher. He was usually paid after each quarterly conference, and he got mighty little money. A chicken, a bag of sweet potatoes, sometimes a cord of wood was given to help the parsonage family eke out a living.

Communications were difficult in those old days. The church was the important center for social and news contacts. The Epworth League filled an important place in the lives of the members. All ages belonged and the meetings amounted to parties with a religious emphasis. They met in the homes of members monthly. A framed certificate testifies that this League was "Chapter No. 8395 of the Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Lebanon was in Cokesbury District, "New Market, S. C.". The dates of the certificate is June 18, 1912.

Mt. Lebanon was one of four churches on the Ninety Six Charge until sometime about 1950, when Salem Church was closed. In 1958 St. Paul, Ninety Six, became a station church and Lupo Memorial was added to the Mt. Lebanon-Kinards Charge. In 1961, Lupo was removed, leaving the Charge as it is today.

Four Sunday School rooms were built across the back of the church sometime about 1912. In 1952 the social hall and small Sunday School rooms were added. In 1963 the large addition across the back of the social hall was completed. The parsonage was built in 1961.

Sara Q. Anderson, Chairman  
Committee on Records and History