

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

Route 3

Springfield, Tennessee 37172

A Brief History

By

Pauline Robbins

DEDICATED

To the Memory

Of

DEAR ONES who have made Bethlehem their place of worship and the influence their lives have had upon our way of serving Christ.

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

Route 3

Springfield, Tennessee 37172

THE CHURCH STAFF 1979

Rev. Bob Carroll, Pastor
Ralph Cobb, Minister of Music
Larry Templeton, Main Usher
Rose Heathcock, Pianist
Katherine Warren, Organist
Judy Privett, Assistant Organist

CHURCH OFFICERS

Clerk, Thelma Tate
Librarian, Judy Privett
Treasurer, Buford Sprouse

ORGANIZATIONS

Sunday School, Douglas Head
Church Training, Johnson Privett
Brotherhood, Marvin Hunt
W.M.U., Faye Carroll

DEACONS

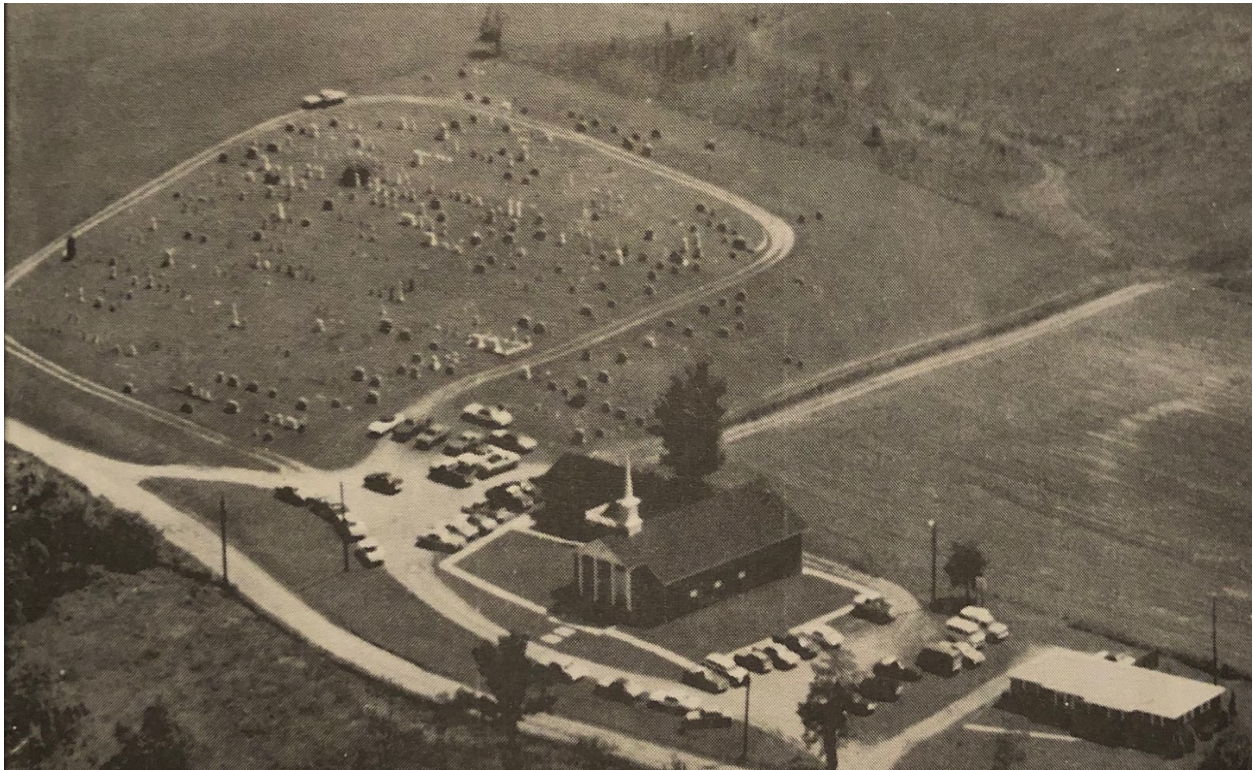
Ralph Cobb
James England
James Armstrong
Johnson Privett
Douglas Head
Bob Huddleston

PREFACE

This history of the Bethlehem Baptist Church is based upon the minutes so carefully kept of business meetings, the Robertson County Association, History of Tennessee Baptist Convention, Women's Missionary Union minutes, and the help of the membership who has given so many facts.

Mrs. Vertreese Edwards and Miss. Eulah Sprouse had written a brief history of the church from 1838 up to 1904 which is included in this writing. Mrs. Evie Lou Walker has kept a diary of the church happenings for the past fifty years that was so helpful. Thanks go to Mrs. Ola Dorris in collecting photographs, to Mrs. Winnie Jones for her interest by typing all the booklet. Special thanks go to the Pastor, Rev. Bob Carroll, who has helped in the writings and understanding the problems and guidance.

The church membership needs to stop and look back over the past, to understand the present, and plan to make a better future.



ARTICLES OF FAITH

We believe that the Holy Bible is the work of God. That it is the only sufficient and perfect rule of faith and practice and that among others it teaches the following important truths:

That there is only one living and true God infinite in every perfection and that He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:7.

That man was created holy but by willfully violating the law of his Maker he fell from that state of nature there is no holiness in us. We all are inclined to evil as all have sinned, all are children of wrath, justly exposed to death temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Eccl. 29, Ephes. 2:3.

That the only way of deliverance this state of guilt and condemnation is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who assumed our nature and whom God has set forth to be a probation through faith in His blood having so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. John 8:15, Romans 3:20.

That the election taught in the Scriptures through Sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ and that none are authorized to consider themselves elected to salvation until they repent and believe the Gospel. 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Thes. 2:13.

That the Redeemer by the Grace of God tasted death for every man, that He is the Savior of all men especially those that believe and that based on the provision made in the atonement all men everywhere and commanded to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. 2:9, Acts 11:30.

That the influence of the Spirit of God is to extensive truth the proclamation of the Gospel. John 6-8, Mark 28-29.

That Baptism and the Lord's Supper is immersion in water that believes are the only proper subjects and that none have a right to the Lord's Supper until they are Baptized. Matt. 26:19-20, Acts 37:42.

That according to the example of the apostles and early Christians sanctioned by the repeated presences of Christ Himself after His resurrection. The first day of the week is to be observed as the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath.

That then will a general resurrection and a final judgment and that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Matt. 23.

HISTORY OF BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

Just off Highway 76, about eight miles from Springfield, Tennessee, stands Bethlehem Baptist Church. She stands on a lofty hill commanding a view of the surrounding area.

The Church was organized Saturday, June 29, 1838. The seven Charter Members, members of the Baptist Denomination, met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dorris to draw up Articles of Faith. The group consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dorris and son R.P. Dorris, Mrs. Margurite Baldwin and son W.D. Baldwin and daughter Miss Polly Baldwin, and Mr. O.G. Oguin. Rev John S. Baldry and Rev. Robert Williams presiding and declared themselves a Church of like Faith and Order in the Bethel Association.

The first Deacon ordained was W.D. Baldwin, and O.G. Oguin was the first clerk. The first book of records was lost about this time.

Rev. John S. Baldry was chosen as a first Pastor who served for two years. Then Rev. W.D. Baldwin, who during the ministry of Rev. Baldry had been ordained as a Deacon and a Minister, was called to its Pastorship. For twenty-three years, he went in-and-out before the Church as their Leader.

Near the site of the present Church Building, the first Church was erected. It was a small log house with one door and one window. The people, being very zealous in those days, often walked for miles to attend preaching here. Each household was its own manufacturer of jeans and cotton cloth, as well as, its own shoes. It was their custom to bring their shoes in hand until they came near the church; then side-by-side the girl and her beau would sit down in some convenient place, wipe the dust from their feet, don their shoes, and arrayed in their jeans and cotton dresses, go on their way up to the Church House, happy and merry, that fortune had smiled on them. Then on hard backless benches, they sat for hours listening eagerly to the long sermons which were customary in those days. So accustomed were the people to walking that it is told of one pious sister who lived several miles away who having ridden to church one Sunday morning, she walked home after the sermon, leaving her horse hitched at the church yard.

The congregations which from the first were large, kept increasing. For the convenience of the large crowds that assembled at each October revival, a shelter about eighty feet square was erected near the site of our present pastorium. The all-day meeting held there have long been a theme of interest around many firesides.

It is not to be forgotten that the old-time hymns were an interesting feature in the worship service. Truly it has been said, "There is gospel in Song". The congregation sang such songs as "Oh, Sing to Me of Heaven When I am Come to Die," "I Came to Where the White Pilgrim Lay," and many others. Their Gospel sentiment was reassuring and seemed to inspire the Christian heart. With the introduction of the organ in 1888, there followed a revival of song.

During the second year of Rev. W.D. Baldwin's ministry in 1841, the Church built a frame house thirty-six feet by forty feet on the side of the present Church. It was enlarged fifteen feet in 1855, making it fifty-one feet by forty feet.

The site for the Church and graveyard was given in two tracts. The first one-half acre was given by Roland B. Dorris and James Sprouse. (Recorded November 28, 1839; Book 1; Page 454.) December 11, 1848, James Sprouse deeded another one-half acre; (Book 6.) The deed

stipulates there is a condition "that the said meeting house is to be free for all professing to preach in what is in good order in the Church where they belong to, so as not to erect any church at said meeting house not to interfere with the stated and regular monthly appointments of said church, and should anything present itself in a shape so as to make or cause a difference, confusion or discord the said Baptist church is to have full power and authority to close the door of said house against such disorder and confusion, and furthermore said meeting house is to be for the use of a school.'

November 7, 1874, twenty-nine members asked for letters to organize a church at Rocky Fort. October 15, 1879, (Recorded deed, Book 25, Page 80) W.T.G. Baggett and wife Elizabeth Baggett sold one acre of land to Bethlehem Church for twenty dollars.

While this church was standing, Rev. Baldwin served twenty-two years, having served one year while the first house was used. Upon Rev. Baldwin's death, Rev. R.B. Dorris was called to its pastorship, and after serving eight years, he resigned. Rev W.C. Shannon, who had been ordained minister, was called to the care of the church and served one year. The following year Rev. William Adams served the church, but at the end of the year Rev. W.C. Shannon was called again and served six years. The next year he and Rev. G.W. Featherston divided their time, preaching alternately each month.



Picture of Sunday School group of 1910 or 1911.

Left to Right: Evie Lou Savage Walker, Nannie Baggett Jones, Ruby Jones Crosswy, Vertesse Shannon Swift, Mollie Shannon, Blonnie Jones Lee, Lovie Savage Armstrong, Fannie Baggett Warren, Florence Jones Phipps, Bell Jones Gregory, Bennie Allen, Lofton Shannon, George Day, Verner Morris, Clyde Shannon, Sim Wilson, Otto Sprouse, Tommy Savage.

Second Row: Viola Webster, Kathleen Kemper Wells, Flossie Jones Shannon, Reba Holman Roe, McCoy Jones, Dewey Randolph, Mrs. Greagory and Daughter, Mamie Wilson Baird, Azzie Baggett Harper, John Kemper, Vick Elmore, Eulah Sprouse, Ida Shannon, Burnis Sprouse, Eugene McElroy, Ervie Gregory, Iva Jones Covington, Mary Ann Ramer, Dr. D.W. Ramer, John Bowling.

Third row: Burns Shannon, Raydeen Dorris, Harold Gregory, Jack Jones, Burns Bowling, Dewey Elmore, Leonard Elmore, Adam Bowling, Jones Eidson, Eli Baggett, Sam Elmore, Curly Elmore.

Fourth row: Purvis Elmore Jones, Mary Bowling Nash, Eva Elmore, Sherman Williams, Hazel Williams.

Rev. W.W. Gardner was the next pastor for a year, and Rev. W.C. Shannon came again for another year. Rev G.W. Trenary served as pastor for five years.

In 1893, the membership of Bethlehem Baptist Church was 361. Rev. A.H. Rather was the next pastor for twelve years. During his sixth year the building, which was blown away in 1970, was built. Rev. Rather resigned in the fall of 1899. Rev. Burns was given an indefinite call. He served until August 1903, and the following fall, Rev A.H. Rather came again as pastor.

For some time the members had been talking of repairing or building a new church house; so in the year 1894, a committee was appointed to raise the funds: W.C. Shannon, D.W. Ramer , G.S. Sprouse, B.E. Webster, Ely Baggett, Charles Pinson, and G.B. Sprouse. W.C. Shannon was chairman of the committee and D.W. Ramer was secretary and treasurer. By an act of conference on the second Saturday in July the old house was sold to the highest bidder. Wednesday, the ninth, the old building went down, and before sundown the two front pillars were laid.

The people had a mind to work, so the August monthly meeting was held in the new church with the Rev. W.C. Shannon preaching the first sermon. The cost of the new house was \$1,184.26. By the time the building was finished, it was paid for in-full with money left in the treasury.

It was a beautiful Sabbath in October 1904, when a congregation of perhaps a thousand people assembled themselves at Bethlehem; for on that day the new house was to be dedicated to Christ. The dedicatory services were conducted by Rev. J.P. Gilliam and Rev. A.H. Rather. Rev. W.C. Shannon, ordained deacon, who had served four times as the church's pastor, was called upon to preach the dedicatory sermon.

As we reminisce about the turn of the century, we see the development of gravel highways, a convenience so needed. Most people of the community now owned buggies, so the church membership increased. A slower pace of life existed then, and the church was not only for worship but a place to see and visit the neighbors.

The grounds of the church were beautiful. Two rows of large maples shaded the lawn and out from the trees were the hitching posts. How grand to go to church in a surry with a fringe on the top! Many others came on horseback with the ladies riding side-saddle.

Rev. P.W. Carney came to Bethlehem as pastor in 1905 and served for twelve years. During this time, the service were one Sunday morning sermon and a Saturday afternoon service with a business meeting. The other Sundays had regular Sunday School with the deacons officiating. Mr. John Bowling especially took responsibility during those years. They did an invaluable service.

In 1906, the church bought a new pipe organ. This began a special interest in music and choir practice became a boon to the services. A rostrum was built at the same time for the choir and the new organ. That year Rev. Kendrick helped Rev. Carney in the October revival and forty-one was added to the membership by Baptism or letter.

The Baptisms were conducted at Sulphur Ford Creek just below the bridge on Greenbrier Road. Afterwards, the baptized members were invited to Mr. John Kemper's home to change into dry clothing.

I find throughout the minutes until 1913, some members were excluded from the church. When a member was reported to have been guilty of drinking alcohol, cursing, gossiping, dancing, heterodoxy, or doing anything unseemingly becoming to a Christian, two or

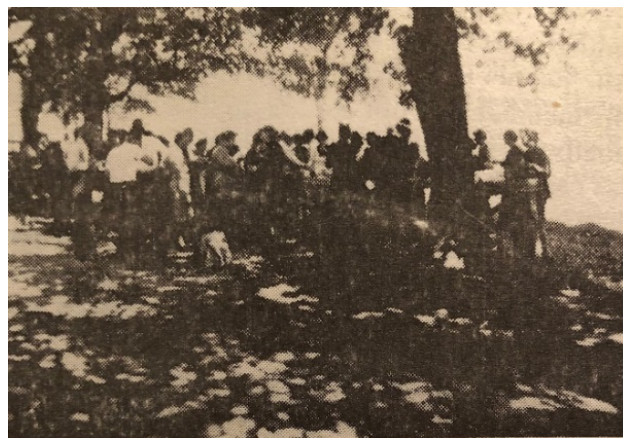
three deacons were appointed to investigate the report. If the member was found guilty, he or she was counseled then an apology was made to the church. If the member was not apologetic, the church voted to exclude him or her. This disciplinary method gradually decreased as years passed.

Rev. Carney resigned as pastor with congregational regrets as he had been the shepherd of so long. Rev. S.P. Devault, who had been a guest minister, was called as pastor in 1916.

The church seemed to respond to new leadership and several advancements were made. The church changed its affiliation from the Cumberland Association to the newly organized Robertson County Association. The Training Union, then called the Baptist Young People's Union, was organized with Otto Sprouse, President; Adam Bowling, Vice-president; Kathleen Kemper, Secretary; and Vertreese Shannon, Treasurer. The Baptist and Reflector was added to the budget to be sent to each family belonging to the church. New deacons were ordained to meet the needs as some of the older deacons had reached the age that they could not serve full time. Otto Sprouse, Omer Williams, John Cook, Carlie Choate, Bertie Briggs, and Will Callis were nominated and ordained.

The United States had declared war and many of the young men answered the call to serve our country. Melvin Savage, Fred Railey, Jett Sanders, Glenos Cole, Verner Jones, Amos Edwards, Willie Weaver and Omar Williams were men who entered from this community. How closely the congregation followed the death list published in the newspaper each day, praying daily for their safety.

Pictures of the 1920's



Dinner During Revival

The second Sunday of May 1920 was celebrated as homecoming day. People came from throughout the county. Many people who had moved out-of-state, or those who lived too distant to come home often, made special plans to be at Bethlehem for this day. This date became an established time for homecoming each year, and it is still celebrated until this date.

Dissension had developed between members of the church. Some of the members resigned their elected positions of work. Rev. Devault resigned and Rev. T.P. Stanfield was elected as pastor. He served two years before his resignation. Rev. Sylvanus Dorris finished the year as interim pastor and was elected pastor at the beginning of 1923. That year it was voted to have our first morning and evening services during a ten-day revival with Rev. Cleve Crosswy as evangelist. There were twenty-one additions to the membership.

Rev. Devault came again as pastor and served from 1924 to 1927. The W.M.U. during this time recarpeted the sanctuary and a Delco lighting system was installed. The oil burning lamps were given to the Orgon Negro Church, and the Training Union bought fifty-four new hymnals for the church.

Rev. Floyd Carroll assisted in the revivals in 1926 and 1927. There were twenty-three professions of faith and six renewals. He served as interim pastor for four months after our Rev. Devault resigned.

November 13, 1927, Rev. Joe Strother was unanimously called as pastor at a salary of \$300 per year. All the different church organizations gave excellent reports throughout this period.

April 9, 1928 was celebrated as homecoming day. A large crowd assembled with the ex-pastors as speakers: Rev. H.T. Burns, Rev. P.W. Carney, Rev. S.P. Devault, and Rev. Sylvanus Dorris, all of them at their best. Services were led by Rev. Strother. Special music and song were rendered by guests from the Third Baptist Church of Nashville and Mrs. J.H. Padfield as soloist.

In June 1928, land was bought from Mr. Albert Pitt to enlarge the church cemetery and was paid in full by the church. The same year the church was repainted.

Rev. Strother resigned at the end of the year 1929, and Rev. Floyd Stark was called for the first and third Sunday afternoon and a Saturday business meeting.

The Robertson County Baptist Association on August 5 and 6, 1930, held their annual meeting at Bethlehem. A large crowd attended both days. Dr. Freeman, Dr. Bryson, Dr. Stewart and Miss Mary Northington were the speakers the first day. Dr. M.E. Dodd of Shreveport was the main speaker the second day.

Rev. Stark held his own revival in 1931. His sermons were outstanding with several conversions. In November 1931, Rev. Stark resigned as pastor, and the church voted to change

services from first and third Sunday afternoon services to the second Sunday. This had been changed for Rev. Stark's convenience in 1929.

Rev. R.A. Johns became pastor in 1932. The minutes mention the support of the cooperative program, but the church minutes show the effect that the depression is having on the community. Rev. Johns resigned in July 1934, to take up a new pastorate in Pulaski.

Rev. A.D. Nichols held the revival services in October 1934, and in November he was called as pastor at a salary of \$300 per year. Before Rev. Nichols could move on the field Rev. Harold Gregory of Nashville came to us. Rev. Gregory is one of the neighbor boys. He professed faith in Christ and became a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church. He moved to Nashville and gave his life in service to Christ.

The cemetery had become so large, and the church realized the care had become too difficult for the membership alone to care for it. Many people who are not members of Bethlehem Baptist Church have now been used the cemetery for the burial of their loved ones. Many graves did not have any kind of markers, so something had to be done to remedy the condition. The May homecoming day had been established, so in May 1936, the Cemetery Association was organized. a constitution was written and adopted. Since that year, the association has met annually. A committee for the next years board is elected at the meeting. In 1979, the association passed a resolution that all selected plots must have corner markers set by 1980, or the plots are open to others who might wish to set markers and claim the plot. Because of the scarcity of space there are restrictions on the people who do not live in the community or have family plots; they cannot use the cemetery for burial.

In 1937, plans were made to celebrate the centennial in 1938. New carpet was installed, and the church as a whole was renovated. The lighting system was repaired, and in 1939 the church at Cumberland Electric Lights installed.

A new circulating heater was installed, and the W.M.U. had the sanctuary repapered and the pews refinished. Eighty new hymnals were bought.



Bethlehem Pastorium soon after erecting. Joseph T. Carter Supt. of Missions of Robertson County, Mrs. J.C. Fuller, Mildred Sprouse, Dale Sprouse, Lois Jones, Mae York Fitts, Roberta Fitts and Jewel Sprouse.

Several gifts were presented to the church during this time. Mr. and Mrs. Paul Harris, Mrs. Ruth Kemper's sister, and brother-in-law, presented a beautiful communion set to the church. Mr. and Mrs. Omer Williams gave new collection plates and a lovely communion table.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF BETHLEHEM CHURCH

Sunday, October 2, 1938, was a beautiful day with autumn colors of brightness which added much to the celebration. It was a day spent in fellowship and one that will be sacred in the memory to many for years to come.

The service opened with the congregation singing "I am Bound for the Promised Land." The one hundredth Psalms was read, and prayer was offered by Rev. Chester M. Savage Evangelist of Dallas, Texas. History of the church was given by Rev. A.D. Nichols, the pastor.

The charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dorris, R.P. Dorris, Mrs. Margurite Baldwin, W.D. Baldwin, Miss Polly Baldwin, and O.G. Oguin. Seats were reserved for their descendants. The Dorris descendants were largely represented, reaching to the sixth generation. The Baldwin descendants were represented by Bro. Jones, a grandson and his daughter and son. Bro. Edd Jones paid a tribute to Rev. W.D. Baldwin who served this church as pastor for twenty-three years in its early history. There were no descendants of O.G. Oguin present. After recognition of said descendants the audience sang, "How Firm A Foundation."

At eleven o'clock, Dr. John D. Freeman, Secretary of Tennessee Baptist Association, delivered an inspiring message. Dinner was served from long tables on the back lawn of the church.

In the afternoon, Mr. Henton led the audience in singing, "Brethren, We Have Met to Worship." Concluding history and recognition of Mother and Daughter Churches was given by Rev. A.D. Nichols. Also, recognized were the descendants of R.B. Dorris and Esquire James Sprouse, who gave the land on which to build the church in pioneer days.

Rev. W.F. Shannon discussed Bethlehem's past "Studio of Witnesses." Rev. Devault spoke on "Reminiscing and Prophecy." Several songs were rendered by the visiting quartet. Thus, ended a memorable day, and we trust it will be profitable in many ways.

Adopted by Bethlehem Baptist Church on November 5, 1938.

During the 1940's the area had begun to overcome the Depression, and by 1948, the church began a building program. Four Sunday School rooms were built, two rooms were built on each side of the sanctuary. The church was newly underpinned. A new front-entrance and

vestibule were built with money given by the J.S. Jones' estate. The auditorium was roofed and remodeled with indirect lighting, an acoustical ceiling, and a furnace. A new sign was erected on Highway 76. The church had a whole new appearance.

September 27, 1950, the church organized a Training Union with Dick Fisher, director; Rachael Gregory, secretary; Lois Shannon, pianist; and Shirley Bowling, choir leader.

In 1948 the church went to full services during Rev. Drake's pastorate, so in 1951, a new pastor's home was planned and built, a five-room cottage with dressing-room and full-sized basement. Rev. C. O. Binkley was the first pastor to live in the new pastorium. The lot on which the pastorium was built was given by Mrs. Tom Elmore and heirs.

Rev. M. D. Sledd was called as pastor and moderator of the business meeting in December 1955. The next month, the Deacon Board reported that more Sunday School rooms were needed. A vote was taken to see how the deacons thought the building should be increased. The question was whether to build basement rooms or whether to build extra rooms at the back of the auditorium. At that time, the schoolhouse was not in use, so permission was granted to use the building for overflow of the Sunday School. In a 1957, the decision was made to build the educational addition. A committee was appointed.



Sunday School 1955





Vacation Bible School in 1955





Sunday School Class 1955





Rev. C.O. Binkley & Wife. 1950-1954



Rev. M.D. Sledd & wife, Betty – 1955-1959



Working Men: James England, Jimmie Choate Connie Reynolds and J.W. Cook.



Intermediate Girls & Boys



School School while Bro. M.D. Sledd was pastor.





Vacation Bible School 1955





1966





Church front in 1961



Vacation Bible School 1961



Choir after renovation of 1961



Rev. J.C. Bigbee & wife (Pastor 1963-66)

The church dedicated the new additions built in 1948, the vestibule built in 1950, and the new addition built in 1958 at a cost of \$13,287.87. The pastor, Rev. Sledd, preached the dedicational sermon.

The church began the deacon rotation system with James Armstrong, Bobby Bowling, James Choate, and Porter Moore Cook. Each gave his Christian experience. Rev. Lacy Freeman brought the challenge. Four senior deacons were to work with them.

June 10, 1959, Rev. Sledd resigned as pastor after fulfilling his contract. He and Mrs. Sledd answered a call as missionaries to Nigeria and have continued this field until today.

September 20, 1959, Rev. Ronald Teague was chosen pastor. During this time Mrs. Iva Covington gave a lovely piano to the church in honor of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jimmie Jones. Money was raised to have the building reroofed, and in 1961, the interior of the church was panelled, the floors finished; and new pews, new choir seats, new carpets, and a new podium were installed.

A new kitchen was built in the basement, and to complete it some of the members painted it and the basement to be used as a fellowship hall or dining room. A hot water heater and rugs were given, as well as, the stove and refrigerator with chairs and tables added from the school building. Mrs. Vertreesse Edwards had handrailings installed on the front steps.

In 1963, Rev. J.C. Bigbee came to Bethlehem as pastor, serving until November, 1965. Rev. Elmer Mason served as interim pastor until March, 1966. Then, Rev. Charles Lee came as interim pastor from April to August.

Since water had been piped to the church, restrooms were built at a cost of \$2,500. In 1967 the church could see the need for building a new pastorium. The county deeded the school building and the land to the church. The school was sold to Joe Pitt, and the old pastorium was sold. By June, 1968, money had been raised to start the new house. By August a modern red-brick home was completed at a cost of \$17,500. The house consists of four bedrooms, two baths, living room, with dining room combination, kitchen, breakfast room and den combination, and a two car garage. Members helped to furnish the home by buying a bedroom suite, sheets, pillows, lamps, curtains, and many other things.

To complete the work that had been done to the church in the last few years, air-conditioning was installed at a cost of \$6,000 in 1969.

April 27, 1970 was a day never to be forgotten. A tornado touched the earth, traveling all the way across Robertson County. Bethlehem Baptist Church was in its path. It destroyed the sanctuary and the Sunday School rooms on each side. The tornado traveled through the cemetery uprooting monuments and breaking many of them. It destroyed homes throughout the county.

Members came to the church with tears and heavy hearts. "What shall we do"? they asked. Prayers were prayed, asking for guidance, and the answer came as is promised.

The next Sunday was the first Sunday in May, Homecoming Day and Cemetery Day. The basement fellowship hall was not large enough for the crowd. The daughter church, Oakland, came with an invitation to use their church for the day. Sunday School met at Bethlehem, and afterwards, the crowd went on to Oakland for the eleven o' clock service.

Money was given and plans were made to restore the cemetery. A date was set for working. The women prepared dinner, and the men began the restoration. A monument company sent their equipment and helped to erect the monuments that the men could not move. By the end of the day the cemetery was restored.

The remains of the church were inspected. The heating and air-conditioning unit for the basement and upper Sunday School rooms was repaired. It was a different unit from the one for the sanctuary. One of the pianos was repaired by Claude P. Street. The broken pews were given away, and the unbroken pews were placed in the fellowship hall. This became the sanctuary, until the church was rebuilt.

All the indebtedness of the church was paid by the insurance company, and the retirement fund was used toward the new building. Churchers and many friends responded to the tragedy by donations. The church voted to start building on September 20, 1970, with the insurance and liberal membership contributions. In October, 1970 the treasurer reported \$36,382.31 in the building fund. Gifts continued to come in, and the membership continued their responsibility of regular contributions. The Board of Deacons was authorized to procure a loan at the First National Bank for \$30,000.00.

The first baptismal service was held in the new baptistery June 13, 1971. There were five candidates. The building was not completed at that time, but how wonderful to have a baptistery, so the service could be performed at home! The baptisery is a memorial to Mrs. Hattie Webster given by her heirs.

The new house of worship was dedicated August 6, 1972. Rev. Charles Lee preached the dedicatory message.

Rev. Fouaker resigned October 1970, as pastor and Rev. Charles Lee was asked to serve as interim pastor. He was a great help during a time of confusion and a time when the church needed his guidance. Rev. Robert E. Carroll came as pastor to the church in June, 1971. God answered the prayers for a leader who would accept the congregation as they are with love and understanding.

Wilburn and Mary Eidson deeded a piece of land as a gift to the church. January 27, 1971. The land extends the church property to the road. Mrs. Lillian Wilson's heirs gave a lovely organ as a memorial to her to the church.

May 10, 1972, the church voted its approval to erect a steeple to house the bell bought in 1912 that had been atop the school house for many years. This was to be done by gifts over a two year period. December 30, 1973, the church authorized a \$1,500 loan to have it finished and installed. This bell has a special place in the memory of those who grew up in the

community. The bell has been rung on many memorable occasions. The gift of \$2,000 from the estate of Mrs. Vertreese Edwards was used to finish paying the bell-loan, and \$1,000 was used toward the building-loan.

The church paid its last payment of indebtedness September 27, 1976, and the note burning was celebrated in November, 1976. The cost as a whole was \$78,460.83 plus \$3,610 the cost of the steeple, \$26,000 was an estimate of the gifts of people outside the church.



This is an early photograph taken of the historic old Bethlehem Baptist Church, surrounded by trees so familiar to families who have had their membership there for years and years ...



... And, this is all that is left of the structure which was in the path of the violent tornado funnel which swept with destructive force through Robertson County last week. The church will be rebuilt.

It was told by the members of Bethlehem. That a bible was placed on a table with a scarf around the bible. After the tornado went through the scarf was missing, but the bible was still there on the table.

\$800.00 Given For Cemetery

“It is still in the formative stage but no doubt some action will be taken this week at the business meeting,” the Rev. Charles Fouraker said, when questioned as to whether storm-hit Bethlehem Church would be rebuilt.

An overflow crowd was present for each service at the homecoming and fund raising day for the cemetery held last Sunday at Oakland Baptist Church.

\$800, more than the usual amount, was donated Sunday for the annual upkeep of Bethlehem Cemetery, also hard-hit by last week’s twister which destroyed the historic old Church.

Work day for putting up the monuments which blew down in the tornado was held Wednesday. One monument company gave its assistance to members in putting back the scattered tombstones.

Regular services were resumed at Bethlehem Wednesday evening, using the basement which was not damaged in the tornado and had been used previously as a recreation room. Fourteen of the 20 pews are usable and with repairs the piano can be used.

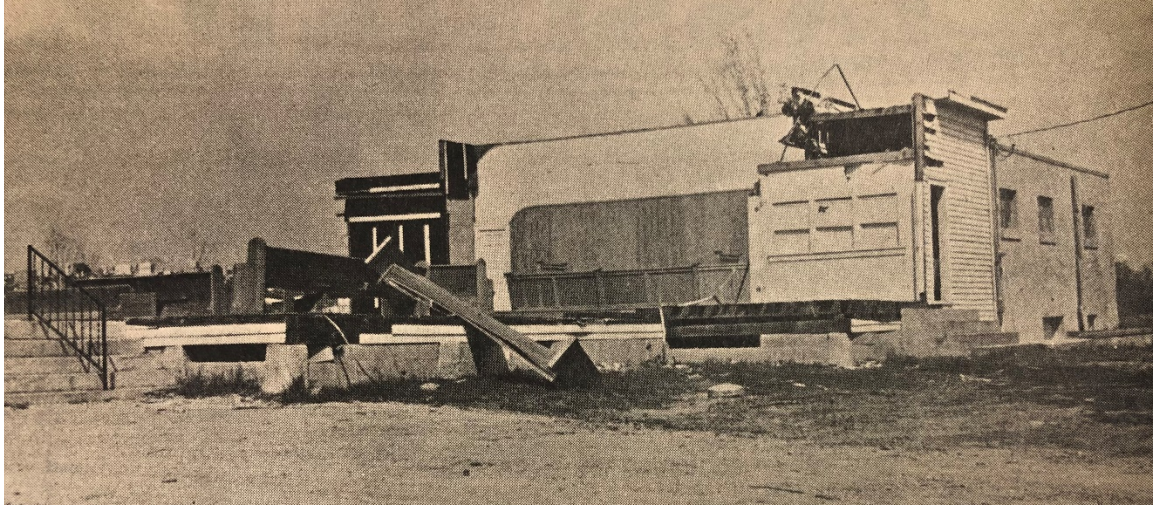
The air-conditioning installed at Bethlehem had not even been used, Fouraker lamented, as he rubbed perspiration from his forehead. The central heating and air-conditioning system and the insulation of the building was done last fall. The auditorium was redecorated several years ago.

The church has a resident membership of about 225

“A number of contributions have already been made toward bulding back,” the pastor stated.

The brick pastorium built in 1968 which is nearby had some shingles, screens, and windows blown out and the garage door was turned upside down. A maple tree in the yard of the home blew away and has not been found as yet.

The pastor has received word that some mail for the church has been found in Macon County and is being returned.



Music Director, Ralph Cobb, wrote this poem about the tornado.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

God came in power at Bethlehem that day,
He took the building where His people did pray.
There had never been a service when His presence I did not feel.
And prayed, God help me to know Thy will.
Just to stand and sing His praise, and the peace you could feel within.
Knowing that He had forever saved your soul from sin.
But Bethlehem is not gone, only the building blew down.
For we met at Bro. John Cook's house for prayer.
And the spirit we felt all around.
This fellowship and love we must spread far and near
So that the lost will know
That we have a church up here.
We must truly look to God in faith
And forever spread His love around.
Never let it be said we don't have a church ---
For it was only the building that blew down.

QUESTION

When Bethlehem Baptist affiliated with the Tennessee Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention?

The study of the history of Baptist in Tennessee is interesting to find that the formation of the first Tennessee Convention was set in motion by a call from the Cumberland association. The first convention was organized in 1833 at Mill Creek Church. For many years the controversy over seemingly every phase of organized work, ruined the convention. The Civil War, also, had its toll, so in 1874 at the First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, a new Tennessee Baptist Convention was formed.

On May 8, 1845, in the meeting house of the First Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, two hundred ninety-three men from Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, and District of Columbia met to organize the Southern Baptist Convention. Its constitution, as adopted, differed in one important respect from that of the Triennial Convention under which the Southerners and Northerners had worked together for thirty-one years. It provided that Home and Foreign Missions should be conducted by two co-ordinated boards of the convention. This was in marked contrast to the Northern agencies which were independent mission societies.

Bethlehem has been served by 34 pastors; has ordained four ministers, three of whom have served the church; has ordained 52 deacons; and has had 32 different church clerks; and has had 23 church treasurers. Four churches have been organized, by charter members, from Bethlehem. Their names and dates of organization are as follows:

Station Camp	1867
Bethel	1885
Oakland	1888
Mount Carmel	1894

Rocky Ford was for a long time a mission, or ARM, of Bethlehem. It afterwards formed Ebenezer Church in 1874.



The history of Bethlehem Baptist Church is as a continual, unfolding mural painted upon the walls of time, a masterpiece of Grace and Love created by the Master, sculptured out of the hearts and lives of a yielded and malleable people. Its days are a mixture of dark clouds and bright sun, but, regardless of the climate, the years have been fruitful even beyond the fondest hopes of those Godly beginners in 1838. The 141 years of Bethlehem are filled with events, but it is not a procession of accidents and coincidences. God has worked a mighty work on a hill. Many have known Bethlehem's altar as their birthplace in God's family, and memories are flooded with days, months, and years of faithful, blessed service. God's dedicated have gone in and out of this place, and passed on to us a meaningful and weighty heritage. Their's is an example of faithfulness, and our's is to do no less.

A pure delight has been our eight years as servant to Bethlehem. No pastor is more aware of the uniqueness of his congregation. Bethlehem is a Godly family with both roots deep in the rural life of our community, and the ever changing community of today. Some of our folks go back for generations at Bethlehem, while others never heard of Bethlehem just a few short months ago. During these eight years God has sent us some ninety-five new members to our church family. It is a blessing to be part of the family that God considers fit to nurture newborn life in Christ. Mine is the joy of being an eye witness to God's moving upon the lives of people. The people of Bethlehem are people of God in whom there exists patience, unity, love for each other, and a warmth that cannot be explained except to say that God is in them. Their growth in knowledge, grace, spirituality, and sense of responsibility is easily seen. God has blessed through the years to raise up a people who are glory to His name.

I find so many lovely things about Bethlehem that have been a source of blessings to me through these years; the strong and faithful folks that fill the pews from week to week, the

dedicated and energetic folks that lead out in the various organizations, the deacons who so ably lead out in decisions and are a constant help to their pastor, those who personally give so much of themselves to make our worship services an inspiration, and those who constantly and consistently support their pastor with their prayers. I cannot but mention the blessing God gives me through our Music Director, Bro. Ralph Cobb. Bro. Ralph has been at Bethlehem longer than I, and his sweet spirit and love for praising God through song is a constant uplift to my life. I find great blessing in our fantastic group of young people. God has richly blessed us with youth that are a joy to be around, and an inspiration as I see how they have grown spiritually. God has given me the privilege of seeing them saved and baptizing them. The future of Bethlehem is strong, and has to be exciting because of them.

The few who gathered to be used as the embryo of Bethlehem's birth must have known a great excitement as they looked into the future. Bethlehem folks live in great anticipation today. Great and wonderful days lie before us. The coming days promise to be some of the greatest days of ministry in the great history of a great church. We must be faithful. We must be concerned. We must be ready. We must be watchful for the coming of our Lord. Until then, God bless Bethlehem.

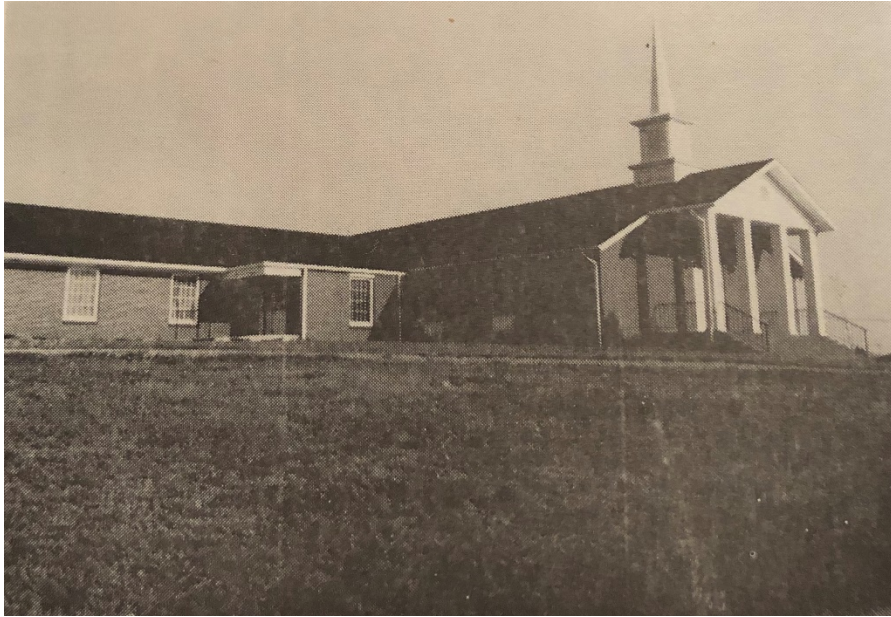
Robert E. Carroll, Pastor
Bethlehem Baptist Church



1979 Walkathon RA Boys



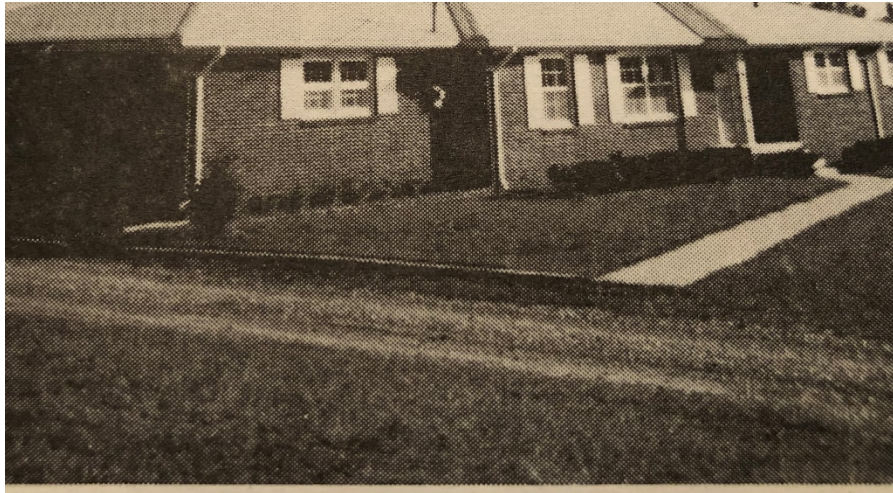
Return of RA Boy from Walkathon



Church built in 1970



Interior of Church



Rev. Fouraker

Begins Work

The new minister for the Bethlehem Baptist and his family have arrived in Robertson County to begin their ministerial duties.

He is the Rev. Charles Fouraker. He comes from the Jacksonville, Florida., Union Baptist Church where he served for 18 months.

A native of Welborn, Florida., Rev. Fouraker attended Stetson University at DeLand, Fla., University at DeLand, Fla., before beginning his service at the Union Baptist, his first church.

He is married to the former Doris McDougail of North Rose, NY. and they have two boys, Todd, 6 and Greg, 5. They are living in the parsonage on Route 3.

Mrs. Fouraker will be a teacher in the Greenbrier Elementary Schools this year.

MUSIC DEPARTMENT OF BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

The records kept by the clerks and the associational minutes did not record the name of the choir director or the organist or pianist until in the 1950's, but reliable sources gave this statement:

Mrs. Mary Ann Ramer, wife of Dr. D.W. Ramer, was organist for years, then Miss Eulah Sprouse became organist at the early age of sixteen in 1894. Her brother, Jim Sprouse, was choir director. Miss Eulah continued as organist or pianist until 1961. She had helped many times during the last years because of her health. The membership pays tribute to a much-loved great lady who gave her best to Christ for sixty-seven years.

Records of choir directors were not kept, but many church members filled the position without compensation. Mr. Adam Bowling led for years. In 1967, the church acquired the first pay choir director, Mr. Ralph Cobb.



BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

Church Pianist	Year
Mrs. Mary Ann Ramer	to 1894
Miss Eulah Sprouse	1894-1961
Miss Linda Cook	1962
Mrs. Bennie Walker	1963-1964
Mrs. Don Traylor	1965
Mrs. Bennie Walker	1966-1967
Miss Debbie Cooksey	1968
Miss Kathy Frye	1969-1970
Miss Brenda Choate	1971
Mrs. Kathy Warren	1972-1978
Mrs. Judy Privett, Organist	1974-1979
Mrs. Rose Heathcock, Pianist	1979

W.M.U. OF BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

The W.M.U. of Bethlehem Baptist Church was organized on July 17, 1912. The organization became inactive in the late 1920's and was reorganized in 1930 by Miss Ruth Walden, a state worker, and Mrs. Robert Shannon, Robertson County Association Chairperson.

The W.M.U. has for many years launched-out in boldness to teach, emphasize, and practice. The Great Commission, Bethlehem is blessed by having a great W.M.U. today that is both functional and inspiring. The W.M.U. organizations lead out in mission emphasis each year in Home, State, and Foreign Missions Weeks of Prayer. The church has a day and night circle. There are three organizations of the church sponsored by the W.M.U.: The Acteens (for girls ages 12 to 17), the G.A.'s (for girls 6 to 12), and the Mission Friends (for boys and girls of preschool age).

The W.M.U. also sponsors many "mission actions" throughout the year. Some of the fond memories are of the all-day meetings in the homes of different members.

Bethlehem Acteens is just 9 years of age. It was organized in October 1970. At present there are 13 active Acteens with two leaders.

The W.M.U. is important to Bethlehem Church, but most of all it is for the Glory of our Lord who said, "Go ye therefore into all the World."

The W.M.U.'s first officers were Mrs. Addie Kemper, first president; Mrs. Belle Jones Gregory, secretary; and Mrs. Cora Baggett, treasurer.

PRESIDENTS OF W.M.U.

PRESIDENTS OF W.M.U.	YEAR
Mrs. Addie Kemper	1912
Mrs. Lofton Shannon	1921
Mrs. Charlie Callis	1922
Mrs. Ruth Kemper	1923
Mrs. Winnie Jones	1930
Mrs. Lela Pitt	1931
Mrs. Marie Jones	1934
Mrs. Ruth Kemper	1935
Mrs. Eulah Sprouse	1937
Mrs. Callie Mae Baggett	1939
Mrs. Ruth Kemper	1941
Mrs. Vertreese Edwards	1942
Mrs. Marie Jones	1943
Mrs. Lela Pitt	1945
Mrs. Pauline Railey	1946

PRESIDENTS OF W.M.U.	YEAR
Mrs. Vertreese Edwards	1947
Mrs. Marie Jones	1949
Mrs. Ruth Kemper	1952
Mrs. Pauline Cook	1954
Mrs. Ola Dorris	1956
Mrs. Winnie Jones	1957
Mrs. Ethel Eidson	1958
Mrs. Ola Dorris	1959
Mrs. Zola White	1960
Mrs. Blanch Chester	1963
Mrs. Lovie Bigbee	1964
Mrs. Blanch Chester	1966
Mrs. Mary Cooksey	1967
Mrs. Dorothy Briggs	1969
Mrs. Faye Carroll	1972

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS	YEAR
John Bowling	1917
Eugen McElroy	1920
John Bowling	1922
Omer Williams	1924
Carlie Choate	1925
Otto Sprouse	1931
Melvin Savage	1932
Walter Fizer	1933
Adam Bowling	1934
Dick Fisher	1953
Adam Bowling	1954
Jimmie Choate	1955
James Armstrong	1956
Jimmie Choate	1958
Porter M. Cook	1960
Bobby Bowling	1961
Russell Holman	1964
James Armstrong	1965
John W. Cook	1966
Rayburn Carroll	1976
Douglas Head	1978

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Although the Baptist Sunday School Board was not created until 1891, there had been Sunday School work in Baptist churches for at least fifty years before that time. Bethlehem was no different, from its very beginning there was Sunday School. It was not as we know it today, but there were faithful folks, full of knowledge of the Word, who led out in Bible teaching whenever the church assembled for services. After the creation of the Baptist Sunday School board there came about many changes and improvements. Records systems were devised, teaching material was printed and made available to the churches, and promotion was put in high gear from the state level down to the local church.

Though the years God has raised up faithful and dedicated folks who have readily accepted the joy and the burden of teaching the Holy Scriptures. God has used them immeasurably to aid in the reaching of lost souls, and in the nurturing and maturing of His people. From the time when all were gathered into one room with one teacher, to today with some fifteen classes and many teachers, Bible teaching has been a main concern at Bethlehem.

The years have been filled with those who have taken upon themselves the added task of serving as Sunday School Superintendent. These able and faithful people have added their own touch to bring about many helpful and much needed ideas and programs. Today that position is called Sunday School Director, but regardless of its title, those who have filled that place have been used of God to further the proclamation and teaching of His Word. To those folks who have led, and to those who have taught we owe an eternal debt of gratitude.

CHURCH TRAINING

Church Training is the church organization charged with the responsibility of better equipping God's people to do the work our Lord left us to do. Before 1900 its duties mainly were to work with the young people, and it was called B.Y.P.U. The scope of the organization was broadened to include all ages and its name was changed to Training Union in 1934. By the mid 1940's the program included emphasis on establishing family alters, members attending Wednesday night prayer services, and witnessing to the lost daily. Bible Sword Drills and Better Speakers' Tournaments were added as years passed.

Bethlehem's Church Training, as it is now called, has been a source of training for many years. With the including of personal participation as a part of its program, Church Training has served us well in preparing teachers and speakers for other church programs. The organization has served to compliment the Sunday School and other programs. Many have been the study courses sponsored by the Church Training. Study courses that have dealt with subjects from How to Have a Better Sunday School, to How to be a Soul Winner, to studies on almost every book of the Bible.

Faithful have been those individuals who have given of their energies and talents to teach and lead in this important part of our church program.

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH BROTHERHOOD PRESIDENTS

BROTHERHOOD PRESIDENTS	YEARS
Edgar Sprouse	1952
John Wesley Cook	1957-1959
Bobby Bowling	1960
Earl Beasley	1962
James Armstrong	1963
Earl Beasley	1964
Johnson Privett	1971-1973
James England	1974
J.W. Chester	1975
Marvin Hunt	1976-1979

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

PASTOR	YEAR	PASTOR	YEAR
John S. Baldry	1838-1840	Sylvanus Dorris	1922-1924
W.D. Baldwin	1840-1863	S.P. Devault	1924-1927
R.B. Dorris	1863-1871	Joe Strother	1927-1929
W.C. Shannon	1871-1872	Floyd Stark	1929-1931
William Adams	1872-1874	Floyd Carroll	1931-1931
W.C. Shannon	1874-1880	R.A. Johns	1931-1934
G.W. Featherston	1880-1881	A.D. Nichols	1934-1939
W.C. Shannon	1880-1881	H.C. Adkins	1939-1942
W.W. Garden	1881-1882	Robert Earls	1942-1947
W.C. Shannon	1882-1883	Thomas Drake	1947-1950
G.W. Trenary	1883-1888	C.O. Binkley	1950-1954
A.H. Rather	1888-1990	J.C. Fuller	1954-1955
H.F. Burns	1900-1903	M.D. Sledd	1955-1959
A.H. Rather	1903-1905	Ronald D. Teague	1959-1962
P.W. Carney	1905-1917	J.C. Bigbee	1963-1965
S.P. Devault	1917-1920	Charles Fouraker	1966-1970
T.P. Stanford	1920-1922	Robert E. Carroll	1971-Now

DEACONS	YEAR	REASON FOR LEAVING
W.D. Baldwin	1838-1839	Licensed to preach
W.P. Dorris	1839-1873	Death
A.D. Jones	1838-1883	Death
W.C. Shannon	1859-1865	Licensed to preach
James Cole	1859-1862	Death
Gus H. Sprouse	1868-1924	Death
Arch B. Baggett	1873-1902	Letter to Springfield
W.M. Sprouse	1873-1881	Death
Vincent McMurry	1873-1883	Death
David McMurry	1881-1882	Death
Sand Wilson	1888-1929	Death
J.C. Savage	1888-1898	Death
Farmer Ree	1888-1889	Letter to Oakland
John Bowling	1894-1924	Letter to Greenbrier
Jessie Baggett	1894-1898	Letter
John Carver	1894-1901	Letter
Gustavus Hinkle	1904-1922	Letter
Plummer Dorris	1904-1920	Letter to Nashville
John Kemper	1904-1956	Death
Crit Randolph	1912-1919	Death
Marion Morris	1912-1920	Letter to Springfield
Mark Wilson	1912-1936	Death

DEACONS	YEAR	REASON FOR LEAVING
Eugene McElory	1914-1921	Letter to Oakland
Bertie Briggs	1920-1964	Death
Will Callis	1920-1930	Letter to Greenbrier
John B. Cook	1920-1955	Death
Otto Sprouse	1920-1948	Death
Carlie Choate	1928-1951	Death
John P. Baggett	1928-1951	Death
Will O. Jones	1948-1974	Death
Glenn Jones	1948-19	
Raydeen Briley	1948-1951	Death
Omer G. Williams	1948-19	
Bennie Walker	1952-1977	Death
Adam Bowling	1952-19	
John W. Cook	1952-19	
James England	1952-19	

The rotation of Deacons began on November 30, 1958, with the following:

Jimmie Choate
 James Armstrong
 Marvin Hunt
 J. Chester
 Jimmie Jones
 Robert Huddleston
 Bobby Bowling
 James England
 John Foote
 Ralph Cobb
 Douglas Head
 William Armstrong
 R.F. Carroll
 Johnson Privett
 Earl Beasley Letter

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

Helpers in Revivals

YEAR	MINISTER	AMT. PAID	YEAR	MINISTER	AMT. PAID
1905	P.W. Carney		1945	Cleve Crosswy	
1906	A.H. Rather		1946	Cleve Crosswy	\$211.00
1907	J.H. Snow		1947	A.D. Nichols	
1908	A.H. Rather		1948	Willie McMurry	\$211.00
1909	Rev. Huff		1949	S.S. Borum	\$200.00
1910	Rev. Huff		1950	S.S. Borum	\$200.00
1911	Rev. Kendrick		1951	David Cooper	
1912	Rev. Kendrick		1952	Tom Madden	
1913			1953	Elmer Mason	
1914			1954	J.C. Fuller	
1915	S.P. Devault		1955	Rev. Ford	
1916	S.P. Devault		1956	James Nunnery	
1917	P.H. Padfield	\$55.00	1957	George Clark	
1918	P.W. Carney	\$17.00	1958	Rev. Byrd	
1919	J.H. Wright	\$124.00	1959	Lacy Freeman	
1920			1959	Ronald Teague	
1921	Cleve Crosswy		1960	Rev. Smothers	
1922	Cleve Crosswy	\$166.00	1961	A.D. Nichols	
1923	E.H. Greenwell		1962	Rev. Fowlers	
1924	L.S. Ewton		1963	Rev. Melton	
1925	Cleve Crosswy		1964	Thomas Tichenor	
1926	Floyd Carroll	\$101.00	1964	Orvil Wood	
1927			1965	George Hodge	
1928	P.W. Carney	\$96.70	1966	Charles Lee	
1929	L.P. Royer		1967	Don Doyle	
1930	Floyd Stark	\$104.05	1967	R.M. Cooliage	
1931	J.H. Wright	\$106.00	1968	James A. McKeithen	
1932	R.A. John		1969	Carlton Owens	
1933	W.L. Baker		1969	J.C. Fuller	
1934	A.D. Nichols		1970	James A. McKeithen	
1935	A.D. Nichols		197	C.O. Binkley	
1936	Rev. Reeves	\$54.75	1971	Robert E. Carroll	
1937	J.H. Sharp	\$45.75	1972	Jack Custor	
1938	Chester Savage	\$105.00	1973	Jack Custor	
1939	Chester Savage	\$80.00	1974	Lloyd Bardowell	
1940	Venon Taylor	\$74.00	1975	Allen Buhler	
1941	Ford Duesner	\$175.00	1976	J.C. Bigbee	
1942	A.D. Nichols	\$85.75	1977	Nathan Hale	
1943	Rev. Huckaby	\$79.80	1978	Lloyd Johnson	
1944	Bunyon Smith	\$108.95	1979	Frank Evans	

BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH

YEAR	CHURCH CLERK	YEAR	CHURCH TREASURER
1838	W.G. Oguin	1874-1881	B. Baggett
1853	J.M. Chandler	1881-1883	G.H. Sprouse
1853	Levi Sprouse	1883-1889	E.B. Sprouse
1867	Meridth McMurry	1889-1894	J.S. Jones
1874	G.H. Sprouse	1894-1918	John Bowling
1887	G.B. Sprouse	1918-1921	Otto Sprouse
1892	Harvey England	1921-1927	Bertie Briggs
1896	George B. Jones	1927-1933	Adam Bowling
1900	Arch Baggett	1933-1935	John Kemper
1902	Roy Dorris	1935-1936	Wilks Baggett
1903	Arch Baggett	1936-1937	John Kemper
1905	Nathanel Felts	1937-1940	Carlie Choate
1907	John R. Kemper	1940-1942	Ed Dorris
1917	Will Callis	1942-1946	Carlie Choate
1924	John R. Kemper	1946-1948	Jimmie Jones
1928	Wilks Baggett	1948-1950	Glenn Jones
1929	Glenn Jones	1950-1952	Raydeen Briley
1931	Wilks Baggett	1952-1953	Glenn Jones
1932	Otto Sprouse	1953-1956	John W. Cook
1939	John Kemper	1956-1957	James Armstrong
1941	Pauline Choate	1957-1959	James England
1942	Verner Ramer	1959-1962	Ola Dorris
1943	Jimmie Choate	1962-Now	Buford Sprouse
1944	Edgar Sprouse		
1948	James England		
1953	Zola White		
1956	Pauline Railey		
1959	Pauline Choate		
1960	Marie Jones		
1964	Winnie Jones		
1968	Kittie Lou Foote		
1970	Edgar Sprouse		

BETHLEHEM'S FIRST PASTORS

This narrative contains excerpts from the book; *History of Bethlehem Baptist Church* written by Vertreese Ramer on May 25, 1904. It contains information on the first pastor and continuing through the tenth pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church.

REV. JOHN S. BALDRY

The first pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Rev. John S. Baldry, was born in England. He was present at the organization of the church presiding at the meeting with Rev. Robert Williams. He was educated near Adairville, Kentucky. He was a farmer until he began his ministerial work. He was married to Miss Mary Ann Butts, to whom were born two children, Robert, and Amanda. He died in 1840, and he was buried in Robertson County, Tennessee.

REV. W.D. BALDWIN

Rev. W.D. Baldwin was born March 23, 1814 in Robertson County, Tennessee. He lived on a farm and attended the rural schools. He was an abervant, studious man. He was seldom criticized for his use of the language.

In 1834, he professed faith in Christ, and was baptized by Rev. Robert T. Anderson into the fellowship of Hopewell Baptist Church, March 1835, in which church he lived until June 29, 1838, when Bethlehem became a church. He was one of the charter members in the organization of Bethlehem, and was the first deacon in the church, being ordained in 1838. In 1840, he was ordained to preach, and the following year was called by Bethlehem. He preached his last sermon August 23, 1863 and died September 2, 1863, being survived by his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth McMurry Baldwin, to whom he was married in September 1834. He was buried at Bethlehem.

R.B. DORRIS

The third pastor of Bethlehem Church, Rev. R.B. Dorris, was born July 4, 1811, in Robertson County, Tennessee. It was in his father's house that Bethlehem Baptist Church was organized, he is being one of the members in the organization. Rev. R.B. Dorris lived on a farm and attended the rural schools. In 1863, he began his pastorate of Bethlehem. For eight years he served the church with \$36.00 yearly being paid for his services. In 1871, he resigned his work at Bethlehem and went to other fields of labor. For six hours preceding his death, he preached to his relatives and friends who had gathered around his bedside. He died on December 18, 1872 and was buried in the cemetery at Bethlehem where a tall marble monument was erected by his churches and friends.

REV. W.C. SHANNON

Rev. W.C. Shannon, the fourth pastor of Bethlehem Church, was born on January 1, 1831, in Robertson County, Tennessee. In August 1850, at Ridge Campground, he united with the Cumberland Presbyterians. He soon bought a Bible, and in this he first learned to read. After much meditation, he concluded that immersion is the only mode of baptism, and so united himself with Bethlehem Baptist Church.

In November 1859, he was ordained a deacon. His ordination as minister, June 14, 1868, was called for by Rock Springs. He received four different calls to Bethlehem, preaching alternately each month with Rev. G.W. Featherston during his third call, and in all, has served the church eight years. The Cumberland Association appointed him a missionary.

He has twice been married, first, to Miss Martha Baggett, July 24, 1951, who died June 20, 1888. To them were born three sons, Jessie C. George and James. In 1889, March 25, he was married to Miss Martha Williams. To them have been born three sons, Aaron, Herman and William.

REV. G.W. FEATHERSTON

by

Pauline Robbins

George W. Featherston was born July 26, 1824, in Robertson County, Tennessee. He married Martha Redferrin, March 28, 1842. Their children were William P., Rebecca J., (Who died in infancy) and Nancy P. Featherston. Mrs. Featherston taught her husband to read from his Bible. This Bible is now in the possession of the Great-granddaughter, Winnie Davis Jones. Mrs. Featherston died in 1885. He remarried Mrs. Mary Wilkerson. He helped to organize Oak Grove and Lebanon which is now Barren Plains. He served as Chaplin in the War Between the States.

In those days, these churches had preaching once Sunday each month with business and preaching on Saturday afternoon. A relative told this story: (Verifying dates from the old Bible.) She says he rode horseback to his engagements. He donned a woolen neck scarf, heavy overcoat, gumcoat, and leggings that he wore when baptizing. Then he took his umbrella and fared forth on those trips every weekend regardless of weather. He died March 6, 1916.

REV. W.S. ADAMS

The sixth pastor of Bethlehem Church, Rev. W.S. Adams, was born near Adams Station, Robertson County, Tennessee, on the twenty-second day of May 1822. He lived on a farm and received his education in the rural schools. In 1854, he was married to Miss Mary Batts, and settled on a farm which is now the greater part of Adams. He was a successful farmer, prominent in his community and in his church. He was justice of the peace in 1854. In early manhood he united himself with Red River Baptist Church, and from it was ordained to preach in 1858. In the years 1872, 1873, and 1874 he served as pastor for Bethlehem Church.

In 1870, he was married to Miss Martha Crozier. He died in Nashville, March 30, 1892, and was buried in the cemetery at Adams.

REV. W.W. GARDNER

Rev. W.W. Gardner, a minister, theologian, and author was born in Kentucky in 1818. He graduated from Georgetown College about the year 1843. In 1869, he was chosen Professor of Theology in Bethel College, which position he held for two or more years. He served as pastor of Bethlehem in the year 1881. He then moved to the upper portion of Kentucky and finished his life's work as pastor of several churches.

He died about the year 1900. He is the author of two valuable books, *Church Communion* and *Missiles of Truth*.

REV. G.W. TRENARY

The eighth pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Rev. G.W. Trenary, was born in Davidson County, Tennessee, on April 29, 1828. Soon after graduating from college he began to teach in connection with his preaching; but after teaching a few years, he gave it up and devoted himself to the ministry.

In 1848, he professed religion, and was baptized into the fellowship of McCrower Creek Baptist Church. In 1851, he was licensed to preach, and preached his first sermon in the old Center Baptist Church. He united with Bethlehem Church in 1859 and was ordained a minister the following year. He served as pastor from 1883 to 1888.

He was twice married—first, to Miss Nancy Drake, in 1857, who died August 26, 1890. In September 1894, he married Mrs. Gillie Payne, of Orlinda, Robertson County, Tennessee, where he resided until his death, which occurred November 19, 1894. He was buried in the Orlinda Cemetery.

REV. A.H. RATHER

Rev. A.H. Rather was born in Allen County, Kentucky, on May 24, 1842. He lived on a farm and had no educational advantages. At the early age of eighteen years he was married to Miss Lucy Newman. To them have been born nine children; Leo, John, Clark, Sidney, Rufus, Belle, Commie, Lillie and James. For three years he served as missionary in Kentucky and East Tennessee.

Bethlehem Church, learning of his Christian piety, his strong faith in the Baptist doctrine, secured his services as pastor in 1888, and he served the church for twelve consecutive years. Under his pastorate the church was prosperous; the members seemed to be inspired with great religious zeal; and when he resigned his pastorate, in 1900, he still was revered by the young as well as, he was loved by the old. Four years intervened, and in the fall of 1903, he was again called to the care of Bethlehem. He feels safe in saying he has seen three thousand people converted and has baptized more than fifteen hundred.

REV. H.F. BURNS

The tenth pastor of Bethlehem Church, Rev. H.F. Burns, was born in Murray County, Georgia, in 1860. In early childhood his father, who for thirty years was a minister in the Baptist denomination, moved to East Tennessee.

In the summer of 1879, he was converted and baptized into the fellowship of Ocoee Baptist Church, Polk County, Tennessee. Soon after his conversion he felt impressed to enter the ministry. October 1886, he was licensed to preach by Zion Church, Polk County. In the summer of 1889, he was ordained to the full work of the ministry by his home church.

In 1882, he entered Riceville Institute, Riceville, Tennessee, where he spent five years, teaching in the public schools, and attending the institute. In January 1888, he entered the Southwestern Baptist University, at Jackson, Tennessee, where he spent three and one-half years, graduating in 1892. In October 1892, he resigned his work in West Tennessee and entered the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at Louisville, Kentucky, where he spent four years, graduating in 1896. He served as pastor of Bethlehem from the fall of 1899 to August 1903.

P.W. CARNEY

by

Pauline Robbins

In 1905, Bro. P.W. Carney came to Bethlehem as pastor for twelve years. He was born May 23, 1871. He was reared by his maternal grandparents. He received his degree from Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee. He was married to Miss Carrie Sullivan July 3, 1893. Their children were a daughter and a son who only lived until he was five years of age.

He served several churches of the county and was pastor of Greenbrier while serving Bethlehem. At the time of his death, October 25, 1941, his remains were brought to Springfield, Tennessee, to Elmwood Cemetery.

REV. T.P. STANFIELD

Born August 29, 1882, Hardin County, he was ordained to the ministry in October 1908. He attended Union University, Jackson, Tennessee. On leaving school he was called as pastor of Waynesboro Baptist Church, Waynesboro. From there he came to Greenbrier Church as pastor while there he served Bethlehem from 1920-1922. Then he went to Dunlap, Tennessee, to take up mission work under the State Mission Board.

REV. ROBERT A. JOHNS

Rev. Robert A. Johns was born in Osage County, Missouri, on August 13, 1879. He graduated from William Jewell College in Kansas City, Kansas, and attended the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

While Rev. Johns was pastor at Greenbrier, Tennessee, he filled the pulpit at Bethlehem Baptist Church on one Sunday a month from 1930-1934. He served several churches while in Robertson County. He was Clerk of the Association for two years and took an active part in the other associational work. His death came on December 12, 1942.

REV. FLOYED STARK

Dr. Floyd E. Stark was born in 1905. A graduate of Carson Newman College, he came to Greenbrier in 1929, as half-time pastor and was pastor of Bethlehem for one weekend a month from 1929 to 1931. He left to enter the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He served several churches. He was Chairman of the Camp Committee of Tennessee Baptist Convention for four or five years and founded Camp Linden and Camp Carson. He was a member of the State Board for about fifteen years, a member of the Board of Trustees of Carson Newman College, a member of the East Tennessee Baptist Hospital, a member of the Committee of Evangelism, and a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. Floyd E. Stark died on April 10, 1950.