

HISTORY OF

Bethesda Presbyterian Church

1765-1965

Caswell County, N. C.



By:
W. E. LYTCH

MINISTERS AT BETHESDA

Missionaries	1765-1803
Hugh McAden (?), 1774; James McGready, 1794	
Hugh Shaw	1804-1807
E. B. Currie (?)	1807-1808
William B. Meroney	1813-1816
John H. Pickard	1816-1850; 1853-1854
Jacob Doll	1850-1853; 1866-1878
John W. Montgomery	1855-1866
D. I. Craig	1878-1886
Walter Raleigh Coppedge	1887-1889
J. M. Greenlee	1892-1893
W. K. Forsyth	Summer, 1894
N. B. Campbell	1895-1897
S. Hill Williamson	1897-1904
S. C. Smith	1905-1906
H. L. Cathey	1908-1909
H. H. Cassady	1911-1913
George W. Oldham	1914-1921
E. B. Thompson	1921-1923
W. W. McMorries	1923-1932
Roy F. Whitley	1932-1945
Herman J. Womeldorf	1946-1951
Cecil C. Callis	1952-1958
William E. Lytch	1959-

FOREWORD

Shortly after coming to Caswell County in 1959, as the minister of the Bethesda and Yanceyville Presbyterian Churches, I began to think with the officers of Bethesda about possible plans for celebrating the church's bicentennial in 1965. From the beginning of our thinking it was apparent that someone should be asked to write a fuller history of the church than then existed. All factors considered, the minister appeared to be in a better position to undertake this effort than anyone else. With the officers offering their encouragement and the congregation promising their financial support, the project was begun with a trip to the Historical Foundation in Montreat during the summer of 1963. Many hours have been given to accumulating the necessary information and writing the manuscript, but the returns have been most gratifying. Not only is there the satisfaction of knowing that the church has a rather complete history of its two-hundred years of existence, but there is also the inspiration gained from becoming acquainted rather closely with many of the good and faithful people who through the years have helped to lead the church in its worship and work. Further gratification will be forthcoming if those who read this history will find inspiration and encouragement for living such lives of dedication and usefulness in the service of Christ and His Church today that those who follow tomorrow will be moved to rise up and call them blessed.

It is difficult to do justice to a history spanning two-hundred years, when much information of value has no doubt been lost and when the judgment of the author is fallible, but a conscientious effort has been made to be accurate and fair in reporting all available information; and the author would beg the forgiveness of any who find errors of commission or omission in this history.

Generally speaking, each chapter discusses only the events embraced within the years mentioned in the chapter headings; but, in a few instances (Women of the Church, the Sunday School, Boy Scouts, and others), it seemed best to treat the entire history of the group at that point where it was first mentioned in the history of the church.

It was not possible to secure pictures of all the ministers who have served Bethesda. In cases where it was possible to choose between a recent picture of a minister and one made near the time of his service at Bethesda, the latter was chosen.

Gratitude is due a number of individuals and institutions for supplying the author with the necessary information for writing this volume. One primary source of information, without which this history would be greatly reduced in content and authenticity, was Miss Hester Womack, Historian of the Women of the Church since 1945. I am also indebted to a number of other individuals in both the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches, as well as to former pastors of the two churches, for some of the information used. Institutions providing important help through their records and personnel included The Historical Foundation, Montreat, N. C.; the Library of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.; the Office of Orange Presbytery, Greensboro, N. C.; and the Office of the Synod of N. C.; Raleigh, N. C.

Three individuals provided indispensable aid to the author in his work with the manuscript. They were Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr., who evaluated the original manuscript and made many suggestions for improving the arrangement and the content; Mrs. C. E. Kimbro, who went through the volume with the pencil of a grammarian; and Mrs. W. E. Lytch, whose speed at the typewriter contributed much.

A special word of thanks is also due those individuals who helped to underwrite the cost of publishing this history. A most generous contributor was Mr. Forrest Wright of Winston-Salem, N. C.

Publication of this volume was by the Caswell Messenger, Yanceyville, N. C., and sincere appreciation is in order to all the members of the staff who gave freely of their time, ability and interest to make possible publication.

W. E. LYTCH
Yanceyville, N. C.
May 19, 1965

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INTRODUCTION

In Caswell County, N. C., just off Highway 158, ten miles west of Yanceyville, stands a beautiful brick edifice known as Bethesda Presbyterian Church. The present church building was erected in comparatively recent years, but the church as an organization had its beginning some two hundred years ago. A historical marker erected near the church in 1956 offers this data: "Bethesda Church, Presbyterian, began as 'Hart's Chapel', about 1765. The present building erected 1944, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile South". A plaque on the front of the church also lists 1765 as the date of organization. On the basis of this date Bethesda is the oldest church in the community, the third oldest Presbyterian Church in Caswell County, and the tenth oldest within the present bounds of Orange Presbytery. (Older churches in the County are Griers, organized about 1753, and Red House, organized about 1756).

According to Houston G. Jones, State Archivist and native of the Bethesda Community:

"The church's founding came less than fifteen years after the first white settlers took up land along Hogan and Horsley's Creeks in what was then Orange County. The congregation is twelve years older than Caswell County, eleven years older than the First North Carolina Constitution, and began its existence while its membership still paid allegiance to the British King."

But on what basis do we except 1765 as the approximate date of the organization of Hart's Chapel? Are there records dating back to these early years? The earliest known mention of 1765 as the date of the church's organization is found in the Minutes of Orange Presbytery for September 30, 1827. These Minutes list the ministers of the Presbytery for 1827, the churches which they served, and, if known, the dates of the organization of the Bethesda, Haw River, and Stoney Creek Churches; and the date of Bethesda's organization is given as "about 1765". This date was doubtless furnished the presbytery by Mr. Pickard himself who served as the pastor of the Bethesda Congregation for more than thirty-eight years, beginning in about 1816. This means that when he gave the information to presbytery in 1827, he had already been at Bethesda for some eleven years. This gave him ample time to investigate the church's history and determine to his satisfaction the approximate date of its organization. Another point to consider is that Bethesda had been in existence only about fifty-one years when Mr. Pickard became the pastor, so that it is quite likely he was able to talk personally with individuals who had witnessed the church's organization as he conducted his investigation. All factors considered, we appear to be on solid ground in accepting 1765 as the approximate date of Bethesda's organization as Hart's Chapel.

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF HART'S CHAPEL

1765-1803

According to oral tradition, Hart's Chapel was located near Quick, on the farm owned by the late Oscar Neighbors. The time at which the chapel changed its name and location will be a matter of consideration in Chapter II. Why the name Hart's Chapel was used is not definitely known, but it seems likely that the land on which the chapel stood was made available by a member of the Hart family. (There were three brothers, Thomas, David and Nathanel Hart, who owned enormous tracts of land in the County at this time. A study of the available records would suggest Nathanel as the most logical donor of the land for the chapel.)

The year 1765 saw the organization of a number of new Presbyterian churches in North Carolina. The primary leaders in this effort were Rev. Elihu Spencer and Rev. Alexander McWhorter, home missionaries commissioned to this work by the Synod of Philadelphia and New York in 1764. According to the Minutes of Synod, these men were sent to North Carolina "to form societies (churches), help them in adjusting their bounds, to ordain elders, administer the sacraments, instruct the people in discipline, and direct them in their after-conduct with particular respect to the call and settlement of pastors." In the light of the success experienced by these men, it may well be that one of the churches which they helped to organize was Hart's Chapel. However, since there is no documentary evidence to this effect it must be stated for the record that it is not known who organized Hart's Chapel. The most important fact is that it was founded upon Jesus Christ as the "Chief Cornerstone". If it were not so, the church would not have been able to withstand the stress of the centuries and witness as it has to the glory of God.

The earliest known listing of Hart's Chapel in the official records of the Presbyterian Church is found in the General Assembly Minutes for 1794, where the Rev. James McCreedy is reported as the pastor of Hart's Chapel and Haw River. (The Haw River Church, no longer in existence, was located near the headwaters of the Haw River in the vicinity of what is now Greensboro, N. C.). The fact that Hart's Chapel does not appear in the General Assembly Minutes before 1794 in no way argues against 1765 as the date of Bethesda's organization since local churches seldom made annual reports to the Assembly prior to 1825.

There are no extant Session Minutes from Hart's Chapel. The earliest Session Minutes of Bethesda are dated October 16, 1819, and begin with these words: "The session met according to previous notice; and having been impressed with the necessity of keeping a record of the transactions of the session, which has hitherto been neglected; therefore, Resolved that in the future a fair record of the transactions of this session be kept". These minutes are signed by Rev. John H. Pickard as Clerk and Moderator of the session at that time.

Normally, one would expect to find considerable information about the early years of Bethesda as Hart's Chapel in the Minutes of Orange Presbytery, of which the church has been a member since Orange Presbytery was set off from Hanover Presbytery in 1770; but, unfortunately, the Minutes of Orange Presbytery for the years 1770-1794 and 1814-1826 were lost in a fire at the home of the Stated Clerk, Rev. John Witherspoon, in Hillsboro, N. C., on January 1, 1827. The Minutes from 1795-1813 were spared, for which we are most grateful, since there are a number of helpful references in these Minutes to both Hart's Chapel and Bethesda.

Mention should be made of one other record which is very old and perhaps of great significance. It is Aitken's General Register for the year 1774, a book which lists Presbyterian Ministers in the United States for that year and the churches which they were serving. Of particular interest to the Bethesda history is the fact that the Rev. Hugh McAden is listed as pastor of Upper Hico (now Griers) and Hogan's Creek. There are no other known references to a Presbyterian Church on or near Hogan's Creek at any time; and, so far as it is known, Hart's Chapel is the only Presbyterian Church ever to be located within a reasonable distance of this Creek. Therefore, it seems to follow that this reference to Hogan's Creek in Aitken's General Register may, in fact, be a reference to Hart's Chapel. If true, several observations are in order: (1) Hart's Chapel was first called Hogan's Creek; (2) the Rev. Hugh McAden was the first pastor known to have served the church; and (3) this reference is by far the earliest that we have to the existence of Hart's Chapel.

MINISTERS SERVING HART'S CHAPEL

The Rev. Hugh McAden, a native of Penn., first came to N. C. as a pioneer Presbyterian missionary in 1755. He crossed the state and preached almost every day for nine months before returning home. In 1757, he accepted a call to Duplin County, N. C., where he labored for about ten years. Having accepted the calls of the Hyco (Red House), Dan River, and Country Line Churches, he came to Caswell County in 1767 or 1768. He labored in Caswell County for some thirteen years, during which time he changed the place of his labors in part, so that it is reasonable to assume that Aitken is correct in listing him as the pastor of Upper Hyco and Hogan's Creek in 1774; Mr. McAden died on January 20, 1871, and his body was laid to rest in the Red House Cemetery. (A much fuller treatment of Mr. McAden's life may be found in Foote's Sketches of N. C.).

In all probability, Hart's Chapel was without a regularly installed pastor in its earliest years. The Manual of Orange Presbytery indicates that Hart's Chapel was first served by missionaries. One of these was probably the Rev. Hugh McAden. Another was probably the Rev. James McGready who was listed in the General Assembly Minutes of 1794 as the pastor of Hart's Chapel and Haw River. But since this is the only year that he is listed in this way, it seems unlikely that he was ever the installed pastor of Hart's Chapel. It is probable that he held services at Hart's Chapel occasionally.

A native of Penn., but reared in Guilford County, N. C., Mr. McGready received his education for the ministry at "Dr. McMillan's Log College" in Western Penn. Returning to Orange Presbytery in 1792 or 1793, he served as pastor of a number of churches, including Speedwell, Stoney Creek, Crossroads, and Haw River; and, as indicated, he was associated in some capacity with Hart's Chapel in 1794.

Mr. McGready was a fiery and fearless preacher; and wherever he preached, he met either with enthusiastic acceptance or with great opposition. The Haw River Congregation became so divided in opinion of his preaching that the split became permanent and resulted in the church's death. At the Crossroads Church he once received a warning written in blood that he was not to preach again at this church; and, when he ignored the warning, the pulpit was torn out of the church and burned.

In 1796, at the age of thirty-three, Mr. McGready moved to Logan County, Ky., where he became famous for his influence in fanning the flames of revival that were sweeping the country. Attendance at his worship services was so great that the meetings had to be moved out-of-doors to accommodate the crowds, a practice which paved the way for the great camp meetings of this period. The services conducted by Mr. McGready, especially the camp meetings, were attended by great

emotional excitement and strange bodily movements. According to one observer, some of the worshippers "ran, some danced, some rolled over and over on the ground, and some barked like dogs. A number of persons went through such strange bodily motions that they were said to have the 'jerks'".

The revival of this period, fanned as it was by Mr. McGready, spread throughout Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina; and, according to Bartlett Yancey, writing in the Raleigh Star in 1810, its influence reached into Caswell County. These are Mr. Yancey's words: "The great revival about that period (1800) seems to have contributed much to the dissemination of morality, sound principles, and good order in society (in Caswell County)."

It is not known exactly what influence this revival had upon the life of the congregation of Hart's Chapel, but it is interesting to note that the man who is often called the father of the Great Revival of the 1800's did some of his earliest preaching at Hart's Chapel.

According to the Manual of Orange Presbytery, the next man to serve Hart's Chapel was Samuel McAdow. In the preface to the Manual, however, the author admits that he probably made a number of errors in his writing; and one of the places where he apparently erred was in reporting McAdow as pastor of Hart's Chapel from 1798-1801. After consulting all available information, there seems to be no basis for believing McAdow was ever at Hart's Chapel as pastor. His ministry in Orange Presbytery was associated with the Haw River and Speedwell Churches. Those interested in further information on this minister should consult McDonald's History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

The next minister to serve Hart's Chapel, Rev. Hugh Shaw, was the church's first installed pastor; and so many important developments followed the next few years in the life of the church that we now turn to a new chapter.

CHAPTER II

NEW BEGINNINGS

1804-1815

The eleven years from 1804 to 1815 were crowded with important developments in the life of Hart's Chapel. It was in these years that the church had its first installed pastor, changed its name, and perhaps moved to a new location.

The man with the distinction of being the first installed pastor, as indicated earlier, was Rev. Hugh Shaw. A native of the Hawfields Community in Oarnee Conuty, Mr. Shaw was received under the care of Orange Presbytery as a Candidate for the Ministry on October 25, 1799, and was licensed to preach by the same Presbytery on March 27, 1801.

An interesting experience in his life as a licentiate (i.e., a man who has been licensed by presbytery to preach, but not yet ordained) is described in Sketches of N. C. by the Rev. William Foote.

"In August 1801, a communion season was held at Crossroads Church. The stated minister, William Paisley, was assisted by the Rev. Messrs. Dr. Caldwell and Leonard Paisley, and two young licentiates, Hugh Shaw and Ezekiel B. Currie. Nothing of special interest appeared in the congregation during the days preceding the Sabbath or during the administration of the ordinance. Great solemnity, mingled with evident anxiety as well as prayer, prevailed among Christians that God would bless the congregation and revive His work. On Monday, the 28th, the public services were conducted by Messrs. Prather and Shaw, without expression or appearance of emotion among the people. The pastor arose to dismiss the people, intending first to say a few words expressive of his sorrow that apparently no advance had been made in bringing sinners to God. Overwhelmed with his sensations of distress that God had imparted no blessings to his people, he stood silent a few minutes and then sat down. A solemn stillness prevaded the congregation. In a few moments he arose again. Before he uttered a word, a young man from Tenn., who had been interested in the revival there, and had been telling the people of Crossroads, during the meeting, much about the state of things in the West, raised up his hands and cried out, 'Stand still and see the salvation of God'. In a few moments the silence was broken by sobs, groans, and cries, rising commingled from all parts of the house. All thoughts of dismissing the congregation at once vanished. The remainder of the day was spent in exercises of prayer, exhortation, singing, and personal conversation; and midnight came before the congregation could be persuaded to go to their respective homes. The excitement continued for a length of time, and many were hopefully converted to God."

The Minutes of Orange Presbytery reveal that Mr. Shaw's first call as pastor was to Middle Hyco (later Red House) and Rattlesnake Presbyterian Churches in Caswell County. (The Rattlesnake Church, located on a creek by this same name between Milton and Yanceyville, was dissolved apparently about 1838, with part of the congregation going to the Gilead Church and part becoming charter members of the Yanceyville Church. The Yanceyville Church was organized in 1838 by John H. Pickard, John W. Montgomery, Thomas Lynch, and N. H. Harding.) Mr. Shaw's ordination was scheduled originally for April 4, 1804, at the Rattlesnake Church; but, because of circumstances not described, it was postponed. At the meeting of Orange Presbytery on April 27, 1804, an additional call was extended to Mr. Shaw from Hart's Chapel. His ordination was re-scheduled and took place in Hart's Chapel on October 19, 1804.

Mr. Shaw's ministry at Hart's Chapel, Red House, and Rattlesnake was doubtless, a fruitful one; but it was not without its difficulties. At the September 25, 1806 meeting of presbytery, a letter was read from Mr. Shaw asking permission to resign his pastoral charge. No clue is given as to the content of the letter, but presbytery did not feel that his reasons for wanting to resign were sufficient to sustain his request. The Presbytery did appoint three men to visit Mr. Shaw's Congregations with a view toward trying to resolve the conflict between the pastor and the people: Rev. William Paisley was appointed to visit Hart's Chapel. The effort proved successful; and at a subsequent meeting of Presbytery on April 7, 1807, Mr. Shaw withdrew his request. The settlement with the Hart's Chapel or Bethesda Congregation, however, was shortlived, for Mr. Shaw appeared before presbytery on September 23, 1807, to seek permission to resign his pastorate at Bethesda. His request was granted, which brought to an end a pastorate at Hart's Chapel and Bethesda that lasted from October 19, 1804 to September 23, 1807. Mr. Shaw continued as the pastor of the Red House and Rattlesnake Churches until 1809; and he remained in Orange Presbytery until 1812, at which time he transferred to Transylvania Presbytery in the Synod of Kentucky.

One of Mr. Shaw's greatest achievements in Caswell County was doubtless in the field of education. According to A Documentary History of N. C., C. L. Coon, ed., Mr. Shaw served as Superintendent of at least two academies of learning in Caswell County. In 1803 and 1804, he was head of Caswell Academy, near Yanceyville, where one of his teachers was Bartlett Yancey. From 1806 to 1808, he was Superintendent of Hico Academy near the Red House Church. (If Mr. Shaw lived near the Red House Church, the distance from Bethesda would perhaps explain why he resigned from this church while continuing as pastor of Red House and Rattlesnake and serving as Superintendent of Hico Academy.)

CHANGE IN NAME FROM HART'S CHAPEL TO BETHESDA

In Presbyterian terminology a chapel is a congregation that has no officers of its own and is under the jurisdiction of a session in a fully organized church; and, lacking official organization, the congregation of a chapel cannot call a minister. Since Hart's Chapel had called Mr. Shaw as pastor, it was obviously no longer a chapel in a technical sense; and it was most appropriate that the congregation consider dropping the word "chapel" from its name. But the congregation did more; it adopted a completely new name. And the name chosen, of course, was Bethesda.

A close examination of the Minutes of Orange Presbytery reveals that the change occurred sometime between September 27, 1804, and September 26, 1806. The name Hart's Chapel appears in the presbytery minutes for the last time in connection with the September 27, 1804 meeting where Mr. Shaw's acceptance of the call to Hart's chapel is recorded. The name Bethesda appears in presbytery's minutes for the first time in connection with the September 26, 1806 meeting where Mr. Shaw's request for permission to resign his pastorate is reported. And in the Presbytery Minutes for September 23, 1807, we find assurance that Bethesda was a continuation of Hart's Chapel, for presbytery's Stated Clerk wrote, "The Rev. Hugh Shaw desired leave to resign his pastoral charge of the congregation of Bethesda (formerly Hart's Chapel)".

Before proceeding to discuss the meaning of the name Bethesda, let us summarize briefly our findings and impressions on Hart's Chapel. Nothing definite is known about the meeting house of the congregation of Hart's Chapel, but it was doubtless a very modest one made of logs, with the congregation using rough benches for pews. Statistics on the membership and its record of giving are also lacking; but, again, they were probably very small, as a careful reading of the Minutes of Presbytery, Synod and the General Assembly would suggest. These Minutes report no installed pastor before the coming of Hugh Shaw in 1804; and, in the Minutes of

Synod for 1800, Hart's Chapel is reported as vacant and unable to support a minister. Also to be considered as significant is the fact that while most vacant churches of this period were constantly sending requests to presbytery for pulpit supplies, there is no record of such a request ever having been made by Hart's Chapel. This suggests either that the elders of Hart's Chapel did not attend presbytery meetings to relay the session's requests for supplies, or that the session, being unable, perhaps, to pay for supplies, never made such requests. In either case, the conclusion is strengthened that Hart's Chapel was weak in numbers and in financial strength during most or all of its forty years of existence.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME BETHESDA

The name Bethesda occurs but once in the Bible, and that in John 5:2, where it is said: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda" (KJV) The meaning of the name Bethesda and the significance of this name for our church is beautifully explained in a sermon preached by the Rev. Roy Whitley on the occasion of the celebration of the church's 175th anniversary in June, 1940. Extracts from this sermon follow.

"It is significant that when our fathers started to look for a name for their new church they should turn to the Bible. They selected the house by the pool at Jerusalem called Bethesda. This name came from two Hebrew words: Beth meaning "house", and hisda meaning "mercy". This was a house of mercy. It was a house where people came to be healed. It had five porches. Multitudes with all manner of diseases came and lay around in this house until the waters should be troubled by the angel and take on certain healing properties. Then they would bathe in the waters and be healed. The sick, the lame, the halt, the blind, all lay there. The leaders of the church, the priests, and members all passed by on the other side. They were indifferent to all this human suffering. But when the Great Physician came this way, He was beautifully different. He was touched by their infirmities. His heart went out to them. Their need struck into His very soul. He had come into the world to bind up the broken-hearted. So He stopped in at the house of Bethesda. He leaned over and healed an old man who had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years. (This man was too weak to get into the pool without help, and there was no one to help until Jesus appeared on the scene.) There in the house at Bethesda the paralytic found mercy. He repented of his sins and was made perfectly whole. Thus, Bethesda became a mercy-seat where people who were diseased with sin, troubles, and sorrow could come and meet the Great Physician and find comfort and peace and healing for their souls".

"So our fathers incorporated the same purpose for Bethesda here. Isn't that a picture of her? For a hundred and seventy-five years the Great Physician has been here healing the boys and girls, the men and women in their minds and souls God has used this old church down through the years to heal all those who came within her doors in faith."

The first history of Bethesda was apparently, written by Mr. T. S. Neal, a ruling elder in the church from 1915-1934. In reflecting on Bethesda's history, he was inspired to write these lines:

"They wait beside Bethesda pool
The lame, the halt, the blind
That they might within its depths
The healing magic find."
"There sits beside Bethesda pool
One quite powerless to move
Until his Savior passes near
To touch him with His love."

"They wait outside Bethesda Church
 Full many an impotent men
 Powerless to break the chains of sin
 Yet with Christ's aid they can."
 "O, Savior dear, abide today
 To bless a miracle to be
 When we create in Bethesda Church
 A greater healing stream for Thee".

It may be that the church changed its location from Quick to the present site at the same time it changed its name, but this assumption cannot be substantiated by information available today. On the basis of existing records it appears that the change in location occurred about 1815, during the pastorate of the Rev. William B. Meroney; but, before considering the data in support of this date, let us review the life and ministry of Mr. Meroney.

REV. WILLIAM BRITTON MERONEY

Presbytery accepted the resignation of the Rev. Hugh Shaw as pastor of Bethesda on September 23, 1807. At this same time a call was presented to the Rev. Ezekiel B. Currie from Bethesda for part of his services. Pastor at this time of the Bethany and Briers Churches, Mr. Currie took the call under consideration for a year and then declined it, but it may be that he served the church on an unofficial basis while considering the call. Support is given this possibility by the fact that in synod's minutes for 1807, he is listed as pastor of Red House, Barnett's and Bethesda Churches. Mr. Currie accepted the calls of the Grassy Creek and Nutbush Churches in 1808; and, in 1819, he went to Crossroads and Haw River Churches, where he labored for twenty-four years. A good account of his life and work may be found in the history of the Hawfields Church, Church in the Old Fields, by Dr. Herbert Turner.

The Bethesda pulpit was vacant for the next three or four years — until the arrival of the Rev. William Britton Meroney about 1813. (The exact date is uncertain because the presbytery minutes recording his call were burned; also, it was before the Bethesda Session began to record its minutes.) Mr. Meroney was born in 1760, but nothing more is known of his early life. His wife, Phoebe, is said to have been a niece of Thomas Jefferson. At least two children, perhaps more, were born to the Meroneys.

Licensed by Orange Presbytery on April 5, 1804, Mr. Meroney did not enter the ministry until he was forty-four years of age. His ordination, once scheduled for October 24, 1806, but postponed due to high water, finally took place on November 17, 1810. Why the ordination service was postponed so long is not known.

Mr. Meroney's first call was to the Deep River Church, where he served as a licentiate from 1806 to 1810. On September 27, 1810, he accepted a call to the Brown Marsh Church; and it was here that he was finally ordained.

As indicated earlier, there are no Minutes of Orange Presbytery for the years 1813-1826; and there is no reference in the existing minutes of earlier years to a call being extended Mr. Meroney from Bethesda. Therefore, we must assume that it was after 1812 that he came to Bethesda. And because of certain facts to be discussed momentarily, it appears that he came early in 1813. His name occurs only once in the Minutes of the General Assembly, and that for the year 1814 where he is listed as pastor of the Bethesda, Griers, and Rattlesnake Churches. Along with his other work, Mr. Meroney apparently conducted services at a chapel several miles from Bethesda, for we are to hear later of Meroney's Chapel, located in "The Hills". As far as it is known, there were no other Meroney's in Caswell County at the time this chapel existed; and it seems logical to assume that the chapel was named for the Rev. W. B. Meroney.

Mr. Meroney died on August 1, 1816; and his body was laid to rest in the Bethesda Cemetery. His tombstone, by far the oldest now found in the cemetery, bears the simple inscription: "Rev. William B. Meroney, late minister of the gospel at this place, was born A.D. 1760 and died August 1, 1816". Since he was buried at Bethesda it is probable that he made his home in the Bethesda community while serving in his last pastorate.

While on his death-bed, Mr. Meroney wrote a beautiful letter to his family in the form of a prayer. Made available by Mrs. H. G. Brown of Statesville, N. C., for inclusion in this history, a copy of this letter follows:

"My dear Children:

Before these lines shall meet your perusal, the hand that writes and the heart that dictates, shall lay cold in death; the immortal spirit shall have fitted its way to the world of spirits, and the decision of a righteous God shall have fixed its fate forever. Under the impression of these solemn thoughts I write, my dear children, with all the feeling and anxiety of a fond father. I proceed to give you my last and best advice, fondly hoping that you will pay some respect to the words of a dying father, and that they will prove beneficial unto you in your progress through this world of trouble. May God bless them and sanctify them to the desired end, is my fervent prayer. The first and most important thing that I would recommend to your attention and consideration is religion. Without this, my dear children, you can never be happy. Not all the pleasures, profits, and honors of the world can render you so without this one thing needful, this all essential requisite to happiness in this life, and in the world to come. Make it, therefore, the business of your lives seek it in all the means of grace God has appointed: read His Word: attend the same, expounded and preached. Do all this in solemn prayer to the Lord, that He may bless and assist your efforts. In this way you shall certainly find: the veracity of Heaven is pledged for it, and the Lord has declared that those that seek him early shall find him. To impress this more solemnly upon your minds, attend to the advice in I Chron. 28:9. ('And you, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever.')

Much, my dear children, depends on your own conduct: although salvation is by grace alone through faith, you are commanded to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. In addition to what has already been observed, let me exhort you to be circumspect in all your conduct. Stand aloof from the wicked, and guard against temptations. Fly the crimes of intoxication, gambling, rioting, rebelling, and dissipation. These are dreadful crimes, and to give way to these is very dangerous. In your intercourse with mankind, be honest in all your dealings and faithful to all your promises. Treat all with kindness and civility. To your inferiors, be humane and kind. To your superiors, respectful and obliging. As masters, servants, children or parents, husbands or wives, discharge your duties as accountable to God. Let me particularly exhort you to be kind and affectionate to your aged mother; and amidst all her sufferings and difficulties, remember she is still your mother, and has labored and toiled for you. Never suffer her to want, if in your power to prevent it. Be kind and affectionate one to another, and assist each other when in your power. You are all poor. Industry and economy must be your dependence. With this you may obtain a competency, and that is necessary. 'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long.' And now, my dear children, adieu. God Almighty bless you, guide and direct you; and oh! that I may meet you all in the realms of eternal delight, is my fervent prayer, for Christ's sake.

Your affectionate father, W. B. Meroney."

THE CHURCH MOVES TO A NEW SITE

There are no records to show when the newly named Bethesda Church moved its place of meeting from Quick to the present site; but indications are that the change occurred about 1815, during the pastorate of the Rev. W. B. Meroney. But what are the indications?

1. The burial of the Rev. W. B. Meroney at the present site in August, 1816, establishes the fact that the change in sites had taken place by this time.

2. Information which was given to Mr. T. S. Neal by Miss Bettie Butler, who grew up in the Bethesda Community, and was the granddaughter of Mr. Joshua Butler, elder at Bethesda from 1826-1875. Miss Butler is quoted as saying that the establishment of Bethesda on the present site resulted from the consolidation of two chapels. Meroney's (mentioned earlier) and Hart's. If Meroney's Chapel was named for the Rev. W. B. Meroney, as suggested earlier, this would place the organization of Bethesda on the present site after 1813, since this is when Mr. Meroney began his ministry at Bethesda. And in all probability the people at Meroney's Chapel would not have felt the need to consolidate with another church in order to serve the Lord more effectively until after the chapel had been in existence for several years, so that we are again brought to 1815 as the probable date for the change in sites.

Miss Butler was further quoted by Mr. Neal as saying: "There had been a discussion among the people wanting a Presbyterian Church in this section. Mr. Cobb (Noah?) said he would give the land and Joshua Butler said he would build the church, and John Jones said he would help." We have no biographical data on Mr. Cobb and Mr. Butler, so that we do not know their ages in 1815. But, from information available on Mr. Jones, we know that he was twenty-three years of age in 1815; and it does not seem that he would have been in a good position to offer much assistance in the building of the new church before he was twenty-three. Thus, the evidence for 1815 as the probable date for the change of sites is further strengthened.

The time the present site was chosen for the building of a new church may be difficult to determine, but why the site was chosen is easily discernible. For one thing, it is about midway between the two chapels that merged; for another, it is a beautiful site on top of a knoll, with the church commanding a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

Tradition has it that Mr. Noah Cobb, whose homeplace was about one-half mile back of the present church, gave the land on which Bethesda now stands. It is a tradition based on the words of Miss Butler quoted earlier. But it may be that Miss Butler did not identify specifically which Mr. Cobb gave the land and that those who came later interpreted her to mean Mr. Noah Cobb. The problem is that if Mr. Noah Cobb gave the land, we are faced with the difficulty of trying to reconcile this fact with the deeds on file at the courthouse which state that the land was bought by the church in 1824 and 1825 from James Cobb and Robert Cobb. (More about this in a moment). Two other thoughts come to mind as possible solutions to the seeming conflict: (1) Although Mr. Noah Cobb said he would give the land, his offer may have been declined in favor of the present site; (2) Mr. Noah Cobb may have given the land without a deed; and before the deed could be drawn, the land passed into the hands of James and Robert Cobb, who may have been his sons.

Regardless of how the present site came into the hands of the Bethesda Congregation, what are we to make of the facts that the deeds were not drawn until 1824 and 1825 while the church was certainly located on the site by 1816? According to surveyors who have dealt extensively with old deeds, it was a common practice for churches and other public institutions of this era to build on private property without first having secured a deed to the property. Sometimes a deed would be secured

many years later, and sometimes it would never be secured. An illustration of the latter is Hart's Chapel, since there is no record of any land ever being deeded to this church.

DEEDS TO PRESENT PROPERTY

The old deeds assigning the present site to the Bethesda Congregation are informative in content and amusing in style, so that it seems appropriate to include at this point the whole of the 1824 deed and part of the one from 1825.

The deed drawn in 1824 reads as follows:

"This indenture made this twenty-eighth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-four between James Cobb of the County of Caswell and State of North Carolina, of the one part of Ezekiel Jones, Joseph Scott, Henry Cobb, Zacharia Neal, John Swift, and Benjamin Elmore, Ruling Elders in the Presbyterian Church at Bethesday for and in behalf of the Presbyterian Church at Bethesday of the County and State aforesaid of the other part witnesseth that the said James Cobb for and in consideration of the sum of fifteen dollars the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged hath granted and sold and by these present do grant and confirm to the said Ruling Elders and church at Bethesday a certain parcel of or lot of land lying and being in the County of Caswell aforesaid on the waters of Horsley's Creek and bounded as follows — Beginning at the sassafras in Robert W. Cobb's line running with his line south 6 degrees East eleven chains to a small black gum thence North 80 degrees East five chains and fifty links to a red oak thence North eighteen degrees East including the spring one chain to a stake driven North 64 degrees West 7 chains to a red oak thence North 66 degrees West four chains and thirty links to first station containing four and a half acres by estimation more or less to have and to hold peaceably to possess together with all houses, woods, waters, and all things thereunto in any wise belonging to them and the church forever and I the said James Cobb for myself, my heirs. my assignees forever warrant and defend the right title and claim of said land to the said Elders and their successors as Ruling Elders for the time being in said Bethesday Church for the right use and benefit of the said Presbyterian Church at Bethesday forever. In testimony of which I have hereunto set my hand and seal. Signed, James Cobb."

(The spring mentioned in the 1824 deed was important as a source of water to the congregation, but in order to secure the spring the congregation had to purchase an odd-shaped piece of property. The location of this original spring is still known to some of today's members, though it is now dry. After this original spring dried up the congregation began to use one located on the road to the Ezekiel J. Orr home. In 1954, after land bordering the church property was bought by Mr. James White, an agreement was reached between Mr. White and the Bethesda Trustees in which the church's property lines were evened-up in a manner that would be beneficial both to the church and Mr. White.)

The deed of 1825 was for a parcel of land estimated at two acres, and it reads in part as follows:

"This indenture made the eleventh day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty five between Robert W. Cobb . . . and the Ruling Elders at Bethesda. . . For and in consideration of the sum of fifteen dollars . . . hath sold a certain parcel of land on the waters of Horsley's Creek and bounded as follows — Beginning at a sassafras in the said Cobb's line and corner of the meeting house lot running south 6 degrees etc."

(At the time this deed was drawn there was a road in front of the church, the bed of which is still visible; and it is likely that these two acres were bought to bring the church property to the road.)

HISTORY OF BUILDINGS ON PRESENT SITE

One of the most disappointing gaps in the Bethesda history concerns the lack of information that we have on the buildings which have served as meeting places for the congregation. It is common knowledge that a frame building which had been in existence for many years burned in 1943 and was replaced by the present beautiful brick structure. But beyond this we know embarrassingly little. When we read in the 1825 deed the words, "beginning at the corner of the meeting house lots," we are assured that a house of worship stood on the present site in 1825; and on the basis of earlier discussion, it seems likely that a building of some kind was erected on the lot in 1815. But was this building which stood on the grounds in 1815 and/or 1825 part of the same building that burned in 1943? If so, part of the building that burned was over 118 years old!

According to tradition, there once stood next to the church that burned a one-room, log building known as the Session House. Perhaps this building was the first sanctuary and was converted to a Session House only after a more adequate sanctuary was erected. The exact time this more adequate sanctuary was erected cannot be determined; perhaps it was about 1824, at the time the first deed was secured. Certainly a good reason for seeking a deed after being on the property for a number of years would have been the erection of a new building.

The building that burned in 1943 had been renovated many times; and, in 1926, an educational building was added. But we will discuss these improvements and additions in later chapters nearer the time that they occurred. It is sufficient to say at this point that while a meeting place is important to the worship and work of a congregation, the building does not make the church. The earliest buildings were not very fancy in terms of today's standards, but the spiritual church was truly present.

CHAPTER III

PICKARD'S PASTORATE

1816-1853

The Bethesda Church suffered severely from the lack of pastoral leadership during the first fifty years of its existence, the first forty of these, of course, as Hart's Chapel. A number of men were associated with the church as pastor during these years, but none of them remained with the church very long. And there were many years during this time when the church was without pastoral leadership of any kind.

The story changed decisively, however, with the coming to the field of John H. Pickard, for he served the church for a period spanning some thirty-eight years. Arriving on the field in approximately 1816, he served with only one major interruption until 1854. His latter years were plagued by severe sickness. (The major interruption was from November 1850 to November 1853, during the first pastorate at Bethesda of the Rev. Jacob Doll. Mr. Doll returned later for a longer pastorate. During Mr. Doll's first pastorate, Mr. Pickard was present for many services and session meetings, and served on occasions as Moderator of the Session.) During most of the years from 1816 to 1854, Mr. Pickard served other churches in conjunction with Bethesda, primarily Stoney Creek; but there were a few years when he served only the Bethesda Congregation. Mr. Pickard owned a home in the Bethesda community, one-half mile from the church. Owned earlier by Noah Cobb and later by Ezekiel J. Orr, this home burned in a wood's fire in the 1950's. Mr. Pickard's association with the Bethesda Church was a long and happy one, and it is clearly obvious from the records that Bethesda was quite dear to him.

It is equally clear that Mr. Pickard was held in high esteem by the members of Bethesda. Indicative of this esteem is the fact that no less than nine children baptized in the years of his ministry at Bethesda, according to the roll of baptized children, had Pickard as a second name. Pickard was not a common name in the community, and it seems likely that these children were named for him.

Additional evidence of the esteem in which Mr. Pickard was held is seen in the handsome monument erected on his grave in the Bethesda Cemetery. Still in good repair, this monument bears the inscription:

"In memory of Rev. John H. Pickard,
Later Minister of the Gospel at this place.
Died Sept. 11. 1858. Ag'd 75 y's, 7 m's, 11 dy's.
For more than 40 years his labors were most abundant
In this and surrounding churches.
His friends have placed this monument over his remains
as some evidence of their affectinoate remembrance."

Also found on the monument are these words from Daniel 12:3, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

Found in the Minutes of Orange Presbytery for November 16, 1858, is a memorial to Mr. Pickard. It provides us with considerable information about his life and work, and we quote from it now.

"Mr. Pickard was born in Orange County, N. C., in March, 1783. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Orange in 1813: and about the year 1816 or 1817, he was ordained and settled (first as pastor, then as Stated Supply) at Bethesda Church in Caswell County, N. C. He labored in this field . . . in conection with Stoney

Creek Congregation for upwards of thirty years. Afterwards in consequence of failing strength and especially the partial loss of his sight, he labored only occasionally at these churches and occasionally at destitute places in the surrounding county. In the early part of his ministry Mr. Pickard labored frequently and successfully as a missionary in several of the adjoining counties. He was an energetic preacher and a man noted for his humble and fervent piety. A life thus spent ended as might have been expected. On the 11th day of September, 1858, he peacefully breathed out his life, having frequently during his last illness given expression to a confident hope of a glorious and blessed immortality."

Mr. Pickard served as the installed pastor at Bethesda until October 28, 1820, after which he was Stated Supply. (A Stated Supply must have the approval of presbytery in order to serve a church, but there is no formal call extended by the congregation. The call is extended by the session, and the relation between the minister and the church may be terminated at any time without the consent of presbytery.)

In the early 1800's, there were very few Presbyterian churches with the financial strength to pay their minister a living wage; and there were even fewer presbyteries with the means to assist struggling churches with ministers' salaries. The result was that most Presbyterian ministers had to supplement their salaries as pastors from other sources. Mr. Pickard was no exception. Other sources of income for him are revealed in his will, which reads: "I, John H. Pickard, leave this my last will and testament. I give my beloved wife, Anne M. Pickard, my part of my mill in Orange, all my land and all my Negroes, and all my other property and all my debts, this 14th June 1845."

The mill referred to was probably a grist mill. As for land owned by Mr. Pickard, County records show that he bought at various times a total of at least 315 acres. The first recorded purchase by Mr. Pickard shows that he bought 143 acres from the Elders of the Bethesda Church. The Elders had bought the land one year earlier from Jethro Brown for a sum of \$500, and they sold it to Mr. Pickard for the same amount. Why the Elders bought this land is not known, but the fact they sold it shortly thereafter to Mr. Pickard suggests that they did it as a service to him.

It is a bit shocking to those of us living today to think that Mr. Pickard should be a party to the practice of slavery in his day, but we do well to remember that it is not always easy to see the "evilness" of evil when it is all about you. No one is exempt from having moral blind spots. It is interesting to note, however, that in his will Mr. Pickard referred to his slaves as Negroes rather than as slaves, thereby witnessing to his recognition of them as persons to be respected rather than as "things" to be used. When these slaves died, they were doubtless buried in that part of the Bethesda Cemetery reserved for slaves.

PICKARD'S SCHOOL

In addition to his mill and farming operations, Mr. Pickard added to his income by operating, for a time at least, a "subscription school". On December 3, 1824, he placed the following ad in the "Raleigh Star": "Pickard's School — The subscriber has opened a school in Caswell County, near Brown's Store, for the instruction of youth, in the rudiments of the English, Latin, and Greek languages — Geography, with the use of the globes. Natural and Moral philosophy, etc. Will also be taught. This school is 10 miles west of Caswell Courthouse, and 7 miles east from Rockingham Springs."

A natural assumption would be that Mr. Pickard held his school in the Bethesda Church; but Mrs. Hugh Rice Johnson of the Greenwood Community in Rockingham County, whose father was once overseer for the Orr's, reports that when

she lived at the old Pickard homeplace as a child, a small log building stood next to the house which was reputed to be the school house where Mr. Pickard and his aunt taught. Additional information about this school has been gathered by Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr., who writes:

"According to an old deed recorded in Caswell records, Mr. Pickard's wife, Anne, sold this school building to the County. The school committeemen who bought it were Arch Hubbard and James Williamson. It remained a public school — known as 'Pike's Old Field' — for some time. It was probably named by the children. (Mrs. Lelia Williamson Buck attended this school. She says the seats were split logs with holes bored in them and legs attached. The fire place was large enough for an 8 to 10 foot log. Oftentimes, after the log burned into two parts, it would roll out into the floor and cause great excitement.) This school house was later sold and settled on a site near the Will Worsham farm, where it was still called 'Pike's Old Field' by the people of the community."

We know, then, that Mr. Pickard supplemented his income as a minister with his earnings as a farmer, school teacher, and part owner of a mill in Orange County. Our primary interest in Mr. Pickard, however, is in connection with his leadership as pastor of the Bethesda Church; and it is to this subject that we now return.

It is apparent from what has already been said that Mr. Pickard was a godly man, held in high esteem by the Bethesda Congregation; but we now ask how successful were his efforts to build up the "Body of Christ" at Bethesda? How much did the church grow in his long association with it?

Measured in terms of the numerical growth of the church's membership, Mr. Pickard's ministry was both a success and failure. During his pastorate more than one hundred new members were added to the roll of the church; but, when his ministry ended, there were fewer members than in the early years of his work. In 1828, the first year for which statistics on membership are available, there were seventy members; but in 1854, the last year of his pastorate, there were only sixty members. As to the years between 1828 and 1854, the size of the membership fluctuated a great deal: it went from a high in 1838 of eighty-three members to a low in 1850 of forty-one. From 1850 to 1853, when Mr. Doll served his first pastorate at Bethesda, the membership was increased considerably. After 1853, Mr. Pickard returned as Stated Supply for a very short time and in a very limited capacity because of sickness. In the last year that he was listed as pastor, 1853, the church reported a membership of sixty. This means that during his long ministry the church actually suffered a decline in membership, in spite of the fact that more than one-hundred new members were added under him.

How are we to account for this decline? The answer is easy to discover. This was the age of the "Westward Expansion", and many of Bethesda's members joined the procession. Numerous references are made in the Session's Minutes to the dismissal of members "to go West". On October 15, 1826, for instance, six members were dismissed for this purpose; and on September 29, 1830, twelve were dismissed, including four Ruling Elders, to make the westward trek. It is not difficult to imagine the sadness which must have pervaded the congregation as they saw so many of their number taking leave "to go West". In the early years of his ministry, Mr. Pickard was able to offset these losses by adding an average of six members per year to the church; but in his latter years, when he was hampered by poor health, he was not able to keep up the earlier pace. The result was a serious decline in the size of the church's membership.

But the success of a minister's efforts cannot always be measured in terms of the numerical growth of the congregation: the matter of the congregation's spiritual growth must be considered also. But is there any evidence to indicate that the

congregation grew spiritually under Mr. Pickard? Let it be said, first of all, that there is a great deal of evidence pointing to his concern for the congregation's spiritual growth; and that his concern was shared wholeheartedly by the session. What is the evidence?

First, is the matter of the disciplining of church members accused of unchristian conduct. When a person was thought to be guilty of such conduct, he was cited to appear before the session to answer the charge against him. The trial itself consisted of hearing all witnesses, both for and against the defendant, and the defendant himself — if present. (It sometimes happened that a person would refuse to answer a citation to appear before the session. If so, the session issued two additional citations; and, if these were ignored, they proceeded to trial without the accused.) The usual punishment for those found guilty of unchristian conduct was suspension from the Lord's Supper until there was evidence of sincere repentance. In extreme cases, the punishment consisted of excommunication; but this was very rare.

A careful record was kept by the Bethesda Session of all charges coming before them; and in the years from 1819 to 1899 — the years embracing all such charges — they dealt with about twenty cases. Not all of these trials occurred during the pastorate of Mr. Pickard; but, since the majority did, it is appropriate that we treat the subject as a whole at this point.

Charges lodged against members of the church included a wide variety of "sins", including lying, stealing, drinking to excess, fornication and adultery, and — in one case — a woman was charged with "dancing and frolicking". The charge most often considered was that of public drunkenness. Apparently the session was not opposed to moderate drinking in private, but there can be no doubt about their strong opposition to excessive drinking in public. The first sessional minutes on record include this resolution: "Resolved that the session debar themselves from the use of ardent spirits at public places or public gatherings. And it is recommended to all the members under their care, altogether to abstain from drinking ardent spirits at courts, musters, elections or any other public place on days of public gatherings: except in cases of necessity and even then to act with caution and prudence."

One of the most interesting cases of discipline, with overtones of humor for those who read about it today, concerns Henry C. (last name omitted here), who brought charges against his brother Levi of using "much unfriendly language respecting him and his family and of threatening to beat him". Levi was cited on three different occasions to appear before the session to answer the charges, but each time he ignored the citation. The session finally proceeded to trial without him. All witnesses supported the charges of Henry. The first witness was quoted as saying he met Levi in the road one day and that Levi accused Henry of failing to keep a promise to stop an execution against his property. This first witness was quoted further as saying Levi spoke of "having a good mind to go by and give Henry a proper whipping". The second witness reported that Henry had said much the same thing in her presence. She then quoted Levi as saying, "If Henry C. came to his house the next day to the sale, he would prepare a stick and would brake his head, and cane him whilst he was within a rale of his enclosure". This same witness went on to say that Levi told her of visiting Henry's home and of being "greatly abused" by Henry's wife. Levi was then quoted as threatening Mrs. Henry C. with these words, "If she was my wife I would put her in the fire, and set my foot on her, and keep her there until she brunt up." The session concluded that Levi was guilty as charged; and, in an effort to discipline him, they suspended him from taking part in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In the last case of discipline recorded in the sessional minutes, under the date of September 6, 1899, we probably find a clue as to why the practice of public

discipline by the session was discontinued. In this particular case two members were cited to appear before the session to answer charges against them of unchristian conduct. One of the members appeared before the session, confessed the error of his ways, and asked for forgiveness. However, the other member not only refused to appear, but sent a letter to the session asking that his name be removed from the roll of the church. This man's reaction was an indication of the growing spirit of rebellion against authoritarian methods of discipline in the church, and the session came to believe that a more effective approach to the matter was to counsel with members in private about their conduct. The session minutes indicate that this work of talking privately with members was carried on by all members of the session, not to the minister alone.

Further evidence of the concern of Mr. Pickard and the session for the spiritual welfare and growth of the congregation is seen in the attention which they gave in 1821, to the failure of parents to present their children for the Sacrament of Baptism. A committee from presbytery was invited to meet with the session to help in dealing with this failure. The committee made its visit on August 18, 1821; and out of this meeting came the following: "On motion. Resolved that this session viewing with deep regret the great negligence by Christian parents among them on the subject of infant baptism, Do enjoin it on all such persons to conform to the Word of God and discipline of our church, by bringing their infant offspring, and devoting them to God in the ordinance of his appointment. Resolved, further, that in order to preserve the peace, order, and purity of the church among us; if any such persons shall continue to neglect this Christian duty, he, she, or they, after due course of discipline, be excluded from the ordinance of the church."

On September 28, 1821, the session met to deal with the above resolution and requested parents who had been negligent in presenting their children for Baptism to meet with them. These parents came; and, after explaining the reasons for their negligence, "they declared their intentions to conform to that duty as far as practical". There is good reason to believe that these parents fulfilled their intentions since the record shows that twenty-four children were baptized between August, 1821, and May, 1822.

Additional evidence of the concern of Mr. Pickard and the session for the congregation's spiritual growth is reflected in the importance which they attached to a proper observance of the Lord's Supper and the efforts which they made to help the congregation prepare for such an observance. In the first sessional minutes on record we find these words: "Resolved, that before every communion season, inquiry be made by the session if any unchristian difference exists between any of the members of this church". (A Communion Season usually lasted from Friday through Sunday, with the observance of the Lord's Supper on Sunday. Large crowds gathered for these occasions, and many of the people set up tents on the church grounds to remain on the site for the entire four days. Many of those present for the services were, of course, visitors from neighboring Presbyterian churches.)

There is an abundance of evidence, as we have just seen, that Mr. Pickard and the session were greatly concerned about the spiritual welfare and growth of the congregation; but, is there any evidence that this concern was fruitful? Is there any evidence to indicate that the congregation did grow spiritually under Mr. Pickard? The answer is "yes", and we now turn to the evidence to support it.

First, is the fact that several references are made in the sessional minutes to Communion Services that were especially meaningful to the congregation. One such reference is dated August 17, 1823, and reads: "This is a sacramental occasion and the congregation has been together four days camping on the ground, and on the Sabbath the Lord's Supper was administered to a great number of communicants of this and neighboring congregations. Their faith was increased and their souls did

rejoice in the love of God." Another Communion Service that was especially meaningful in the life of the congregation was observed in connection with a meeting of Presbytery at Bethesda. The sessional minutes read: "The Presbytery of Orange met at Bethesda on the 19th of June 1850 and closed its labors on the 24th. We had a full attendance and very harmonious meeting. On Sabbath the crowd was so great it was thought best to hold Divine Services in the house and at the stand at the same time. The Communion at the stand was exceedingly solemn and impressive." (Note the reference to the stand. Apparently this stand was much like the "bush-arbors" used by the Primitive Baptist of our County today.)

Further evidence that the congregation grew spiritually under the leadership of Mr. Pickard and the session is found in the organization of a missionary association at Bethesda to strengthen the church's support of "foreign missions". Known to have existed as early as 1835, this missionary association at Bethesda is believed to have been the first one organized in Orange Presbytery. A copy of the constitution of this association, together with a listing of the members and their contributions for 1835, was found in an old Bible belonging to the Jones' family (John Jones, elder from 1826 to 1854?).

A reading of this constitution, printed below, reveals the seriousness which these early members attached to the work of missions as well as the business-like manner in which they conducted the affairs of the association.

"Believing it to be the duty of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ to aid in spreading his Gospel, and that we may act expediently in this work of acting in concert with others, we associate under the following constitution:"

"Article 1. The name of the association shall be the Missionary Association of Bethesda Church Auxiliary of the Board of Missions of Orange Presbytery."

"Article 2. Any person who shall contribute annually to its funds shall be a member, any member may at any annual meeting change the amount of his or her annual subscription or may at any time withdraw from the society entirely by giving notice to the secretary."

"Article 3. The management of the affairs of this society shall be committed entirely to the pastor and session who shall act as the executive committee of Missions of the congregation; they will have power to appoint other persons to aid them that they may think proper and shall report annually to the society."

"Article 4. It shall be the privilege of the Association if they desire it to designate the missionaries they will aid and so when they take on their funds for individual missionaries they will expect from them copies of the reports that are sent to the Parent Board."

"Article 5. The annual meeting of this Association shall be on the Saturday before the third Sabbath in March at which time the annual contribution shall become due. The executive committee shall at that time present a report of what has been done the preceding year and the secretary shall immediately transmit a copy to the secretary of the Board of Orange Presbytery. Seven members of the Association shall be called a quorum."

"Article 6. Notice shall be given of the annual meeting from the pulpit. This constitution may be"

The words of the constitution end at this point, but a list of the subscribers and their contributions for 1835 follows.

"Subscribers' names in 1835 of the Missionary Association:

Thomas Powell	25 paid	James Perkins	\$1.00 paid
James M. Neal25 paid	Elizabeth Scott	\$1.00 paid
Richard Smith50 paid	Margaret Watt	\$1.00 paid
Antiochus Boswell50 paid	John N. Watt	\$2.00 paid
Alvis Smith	-.25 paid	Payton S. Bethel	\$1.00 paid

Isaac Simmons	.50 paid	Joseph Neal	\$1.00 paid
William Butler	.25 paid	J. Thornton	.50 paid
John Jones	\$1.00 paid	Samuel Cornell	.50 paid
Bedford Hadock	.25 paid		

EARLY ELDERS

Tribute has already been paid to the session that ruled with Mr. Pickard and shared his concern for the church's spiritual growth; but, before concluding this chapter, let us list the names of the men who are known to have served in this capacity prior to 1854, as well as all readily available information about them. (Sources of information are the 1817, 1824, and 1825 deeds on file at the County courthouse, the Minutes of the Session and the roll of the church.)

A. Elders serving the church in 1817:

James Cobb, died May 17, 1853

Ezekiel Jones, died November 1, 1825

James Orr, Sr. — No information. Perhaps he was the father of Andrew and Ezekiel Orr.

Joseph Scott, died in August, 1830

George Williams, dismissed to join the Rattlesnake Church, August 18, 1821.

B. Elders serving the church in 1821, in addition to some already named:

Zacharia Neal, born Dec. 1, 1787; died Jan. 4, 1850; buried in old Neal-Graves Cemetery. He was the first of the Neal dynasty to settle in Caswell County.

Henry Cobb, dismissed "to go West", September 29, 1830; died in 1838.

John Stamps, dismissed to Baptist Church, August 18, 1824.

C. Elders serving the church in 1825, in addition to some already named:

John Swift, ordained 1823; dismissed "to go West", September 29, 1830.

Benjamin Elmore, ordained 1823; dismissed "to go West", September 29, 1830.

D. Elders serving the church from 1826 to 1853, in addition to some already named:

John Jones, ordained July 16, 1826; died May 29, 1854.

(More about him later.)

Joshua Butler, ordained July 16, 1826; died October, 1875.

Maj. Daniel A. Allen, installed about 1827; dismissed Oct. 15, 1832.

James Jones, ordained June 20, 1830; dismissed "to go West", Sept. 29, 1830.

Joseph K. Cobb, ordained Aug. 18, 1835; dismissed Sept. 20, 1846.

Caleb Jones, ordained Aug. 18, 1835; dismissed Sept., 1838.

Stephen Neal, son of Zacharia, born 1812; ordained 3rd Sunday in Dec., 1843; dismissed to Winston, Dec. 28, 1879; died 1892; Clerk of Session, 1845-1878.

Dr. Robert H. Scales, ordained May 19, 1845; dismissed Dec., 1874, to organize First Presbyterian Church, Reidsville. Served with distinction as Ruling Elder in this church until death, Oct. 28, 1882.

Littleton A. Gwynn, ordained May 19, 1845; died July 14, 1853.

Only three of the above men, James Cobb, John Jones, and Stephen Neal, are known to be buried in the Bethesda Cemetery. At least eleven of the group of twenty moved their membership away from Bethesda at one time or another, and four of them, as mentioned earlier, all went West together on September 29, 1830.

One of the most active elders in the group, and one about whom considerable information is available, is John Jones, who lies buried next to the Rev. William Meroney in the Bethesda Cemetery. The inscription on Elder Jones' tombstone gives us clear insight into his character and reputation. The inscription reads: "He was an affectionate father and husband. A kind friend and neighbor. And a worthy citizen. He had only to be known to be loved. He was a prominent elder in the Presbyterian Church for nearly 30 years." Mr. Jones was instrumental in helping to build a church on the present site, and he was a prominent leader in the life and work of the Bethesda Church. Some indication of this is found in a story told by Oscar Fitzgerald, Bishop of the Methodist Church who preached his first sermon at Bethesda. Describing the experience, Bishop Fitzgerald said, "Being a very young man I went to Bethesda to attend services. When I drove up, Uncle Johnny Jones greeted me and said the pastor was sick and could not be there and that he had heard I was an exhorter and asked that I lead the meeting." The Bishop said he declined at first, but that after "Uncle Johnny" offered to lead the hymns and prayers he volunteered to deliver the message.

The first Deacons were not elected at Bethesda until 1858, and we will delay discussion of these officers until we come to that point in the history.

Mr. Pickard's last meeting with the Session was on May 20, 1854. His death occurred a little more than four years later on September 11, 1858. Having spent the major portion of his adult life in association with the Bethesda Church, it was appropriate that his body should be laid to rest in the Bethesda Cemetery. At the time of his funeral the congregation no doubt recalled the length and depth of his ministry among them and was able to unite in saying, "Well done, thy good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the Master's joy."

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRTH OF A NEW CHURCH AND THE NEAR DEATH OF AN OLD ONE

1854-1893

In the thirty-nine years from 1854 to 1893, the Bethesda Church went from a time of comparative strength to a point approaching death. Support for this generalization is found in the record of the church's giving for this period and in the size of the church's membership.

In the years just prior to the Civil War, when prosperity was commonplace throughout the South, the Bethesda Church reached its greatest strength financially since the time of its founding. In the year 1860, for instance, the church paid the Rev. John W. Montgomery a salary of \$520.00 for half his time. Compared to salaries paid by the church in earlier and later years, this was indeed a handsome sum. (In 1853, for example, Bethesda paid only \$175.00 to the Rev. Jacob Doll for half his time; and, in 1888, the church was able to pay the Rev. W. R. Coppedge only \$76.65 on a promised salary for the year of \$150.00.) The comparative financial strength of the church in the pre-Civil War days is seen also in the church's giving to benevolences. Judging from the record, the General Assembly was then organized under four boards or agencies for carrying on its work: Foreign Missions, Domestic Missions, Education, and Publications. The giving of Bethesda to these boards in the years from 1851 to 1856, as seen in the table below, reflects the growing financial strength of the church in these years.

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Education	Publications	Totals
1851	\$ 8.50	\$ 6.02	—	—	\$14.52
1852	\$ 9.00	—	\$ 6.48	—	\$15.48
1854	\$13.00	\$ 7.00	\$ 7.00	—	\$27.00
1855	\$13.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 5.00	\$30.00
1856	\$28.00	\$ 5.00	\$16.00	—	\$49.00

In March of 1856, the session sought to put the church's support of benevolences on a sounder footing by designating one Sunday in each year for receiving a special offering for each of the causes. Unfortunately, no record was kept of the offerings received in the years that followed; therefore, we do not know what result the effort of the session had on the church's giving to benevolences. But, remembering the general prosperity prevalent throughout the South prior to the Civil War, we may safely assume that the size of the church's gifts to benevolences continued to increase until the outbreak of the war in April, 1861.

A short time after the outbreak of the war, however, the financial situation of the church began to weaken; and, in the years that followed, the church's financial plight became desperate. The beginning of these financial difficulties is reflected in the sessional minutes for October 13, 1861: "In order to meet a debt which has been due from the church, the deacons were authorized to make an assessment on each member to pay the same." In all probability this debt was part of the minister's salary for 1861, because there was no certification at the end of the church year by the minister, as was common at this time, that his salary had been paid. If the debt referred to was the minister's salary, then the effort to meet the debt by assessment was in part successful because there was a certification by Mr. Montgomery at the end of the church year of 1862, that he had received \$1,000.00 for his services (apparently for two years).

After 1862, the church sharply reduced the amount promised on the preacher's salary, and it apparently had increasing difficulty in paying the amount promised, especially after the organization of the First Church in Reidsville on January 15, 1875. In December 1870, Mr. Doll certified that his salary had been paid, "except a balance of \$136.00. In 1886, when Dr. Craig ended his relations with Bethesda as Stated Supply, the church was indebted to him for \$48.35. By way of settlement, Mr. Craig proposed that the church transfer to him whatever books he had in his library belonging to the church, "together with whatever amount of money may be collected toward the payment of the debt". The amount collected was \$23.00. The financial situation continued to worsen; and, in 1888, the church was able to pay Mr. Coppedge only \$76.65 on a promised salary for the year of \$150.00. Total contributions to benevolences in this same year amounted to \$14.45; and, in all probability, they were even less in the immediately preceding years.

Financially, then, the church went from comparative strength to distressing weakness in the years from 1854-1893.

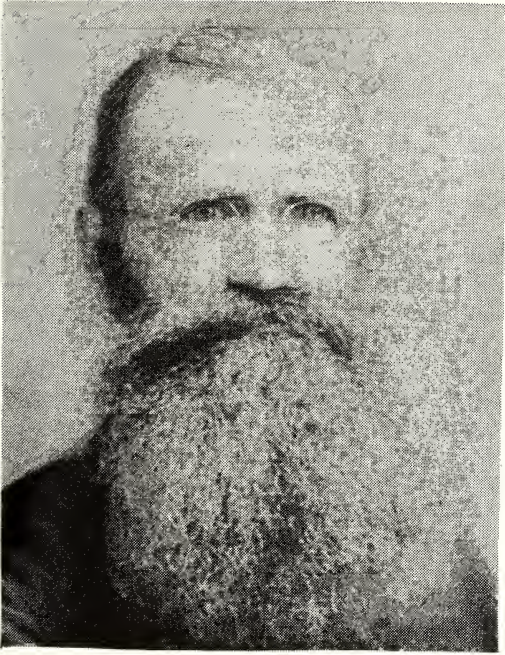
The same thing happened to the membership of the church in these same years. In 1857, there were seventy-one members on the church's roll. This number remained fairly constant through the war and even up until 1874; but, after 1874, the size of the membership began to decline drastically. Thus, by 1888, there were only twenty-one members. The major cause of the decline, apparently, was the organization of the First Church of Reidsville. Not only did thirteen of the members of Bethesda transfer their membership to the Reidsville Church when it was organized on January 15, 1875, with other Bethesda members following suit in the next few years, but this new church doubtless received a number of members in its early years from other sources who would have joined the Bethesda Church had there been no church in Reidsville. The quality of the members making the transfer from Bethesda to Reidsville was also significant. In this group, no doubt, were some of Bethesda's wealthiest members.

The church's membership, then, like the church's financial situation, went from a point of comparative strength to distressing weakness in the years from 1854-1893. The year 1888, with a resident membership of twenty-one represented an all-time low for the church as far as records show; and it was not until after 1894, that the membership began to show any appreciable growth.

Since the major causes of the church's decline in financial strength and in membership during these years were the Civil War and the organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Reidsville, we shall have more to say about both these subjects as we discuss the ministers serving the church at the time these events occurred.

The first minister to serve the church in the period under consideration was the Rev. Jacob Doll; but, since his second pastorate was much longer than the first, and since it was during his second pastorate that the Reidsville Church was organized, it seems best to skip over him for the moment and begin our discussion of the ministers of this period with the Rev. J. W. Montgomery. Other ministers serving the church in this period, in addition to Mr. Doll and Mr. Montgomery, were D. I. Craig, W. R. Coppedge, and J. M. Greenlee.

JOHN WATT MONTGOMERY



Born in Caswell County, N. C., on October 24, 1825, J. W. Montgomery was the son of David M. and Jane Watt Montgomery. His childhood was spent at the old Montgomery homeplace near Blanch. The nearest Presbyterian Church apparently was Gillead, and it was this church that his family probably attended. Mr. Montgomery's literary training was received at Samuel King's High School. After teaching school for four years, he enrolled in 1850, as a student at Union Seminary, Richmond. Transferring later to Princeton, he graduated from this seminary in 1853. As a licentiate, he served the Antioch and Pacelot, S. C. Churches from the time of graduation until the end of 1854. In January of 1855, he began his labors at Bethesda, and served as Stated Supply until August 26, 1855, at which time he was ordained at Bethesda and installed as pastor.

The commission responsible for his ordination and installation was comprised of Dr. Alexander Wilson, educator and minister, who presided and presented the sermon; the Rev. John Grasty, pastor at Yanceyville and Griers, who charged the congregation; and the Rev. William N. Mebane, who charged the pastor.

Mr. Montgomery, giving at least half of his time to the Bethesda Congregation, continued as pastor of Bethesda for the next ten and one-half years. The other half of his time during these years was devoted to a variety of works. For several of these years, he was employed for half his time by Orange Presbytery to do missionary work in surrounding areas. It was during this time that he led in the organization of three churches: Mt. Airy in 1858, Wentworth in 1859, and Leaksville in 1860. Some of his time in these years was also devoted to serving the Speedwell and Leaksville Churches as pastor.

Mr. Montgomery's address during most of the years he served Bethesda was Lawsonville, and it is thought that he made his home just across the Caswell County line in Rockingham County.

In 1866, because of failing health, he moved to Florida, where he served the Ocala and other churches for four years. In 1870, he moved to Georgia and served the Walthourville and Fleming Churches for almost twenty years. His next pastorate was a short one at Dorchester, Ga. In 1893, he moved to Texas where he served the Gidding and other churches until his death. He died at Gidding on January 23, 1904, and was buried at this place.

Mr. Montgomery's first marriage was to Annie Jean Bingham, and to this union were born five children. The two oldest children, Robina and Eliza, received the Sacrament of Baptism at Bethesda. A son, James Alves, was a Presbyterian minister, whose entire ministry was spent in Texas and Florida. (Several descendants of James Alves Montgomery now live in the Greenwood Community of Rockingham

County. Among these is Mrs. Mamie Lila Oldham, second wife of the Rev. George Oldham, pastor of the Bethesda, Yanceyville, Griers, and Pleasant Grove Churches from 1913-1921.)

The Rev. John Watt Montgomery's second marriage was to Mrs. Matilda (Fleming) Walthour and took place on August 9, 1887.

Some insight into Mr. Montgomery's qualities as a man and pastor are afforded by a memorial in the November 9, 1905 minutes of Brazos Presbytery (Texas): "Rev. J. W. Montgomery was a man of strong character, a good preacher, a live presbyter. With a clear and decided mind, and a sympathetic heart, he had the qualities of a successful pastor".

A total of thirty-nine members were received at Bethesda during Mr. Montgomery's pastorate, but heavy losses resulting from transfers and other causes offset the gains. Therefore, the net growth of the membership during his pastorate was not large.

It has been observed through the centuries that material prosperity does not usually breed spiritual concern, and there is evidence of considerable indifference on the part of some of Bethesda's members during the years of general prosperity prior to the war. On May 22, 1858, for instance, Mr. Montgomery asked the session to take action "in regard to those members of the church who do not attend the meetings either for prayer or the preaching of the word". At a subsequent meeting, Elder Joshua Butler was appointed to visit and converse with these members relative to their negligence. And at a still later meeting, he made a "satisfactory report in regard to his visit and conversation" with these members. Another effort on the part of the session to promote spiritual growth on the part of the congregation at a time when spiritual indifference was rampant was the setting apart of the "Saturday before the 2nd Lord's Day in April (1858) as a day of fasting and prayer that God would be pleased to pour out His Spirit and revive us."

FIRST DEACONS

One of the most noteworthy accomplishments during Mr. Montgomery's Bethesda pastorate was the election of the church's first deacons. Prior to this time the elders had fulfilled the functions of the deacons, as well as those of the session. The first election of deacons was held on May 27, 1858; and the two men nominated for the office by the session and elected by the congregation were William P. Montgomery and Anthony S. Williamson. The ordination and installation of these two men occurred on June 20, 1858.

THE CIVIL WAR

Mr. Montgomery's pastorate of ten and one-half years encompassed the tragic years of the Civil War, and it is to the story of the effect of the war upon the life and work of the church that we now turn for a moment.

The Civil War, as such, is not mentioned in the minutes of the session, but it is clear from the facts reported that it had a most serious and prolonged effect upon the life and work of the church. The most obvious effect was the decline in the financial strength of the church, a matter which was covered at the outset of the chapter. The church remained in financial straits for many years, and reached its lowest point, apparently, about 1888.

It would appear that another effect of the war was the failure of the church to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1865. There are no indications that the congregation was even aware of the church's age in 1865, much less any indication that any sort of celebration was held. Apparently the session and congregation were so concerned about the progress of the war and so afflicted by its deprivations, that they were either oblivious to the church's age or in no mood for celebrating.

Another result of the Civil War on the life of the congregation was the loss of a number of its young men in the war. At least two of its members died in the war and were buried elsewhere: Thomas G. Slade (Scales?) was killed in battle on June 13, 1864, and Joseph Nance died as a prisoner in 1865. There are at least three men buried in the Bethesda Cemetery who lost their lives in the Civil War, but there is no indication that they were ever members at Bethesda. These men are James Gomer, Jesse Siddle, and Felix arshall Neal.

The only men from Bethesda known to have fought in the Civil War and survived were A. P. Orr and E. J. Orr although there may have been others.

NEGRO MEMBERS

Closely associated with the Civil War is the story of the Negroes who have been members of Bethesda. Although it was a common practice for Negroes to attend church with their masters in the days of slavery and in some cases to join the same church, the Negro membership at Bethesda was never large. According to the sessional minutes and the roll of the church, only five Negroes are known to have been members although it is likely a larger number attended services. The earliest reference to a Negro being affiliated with Bethesda is found on the list of baptized persons. This list shows that Lucy Cobb (black) received the Sacrament of Baptism on November 17, 1822. Baptized on this same date and received as a member was Miss Catherine Cobb who was apparently the mistress of Lucy Cobb. There is no indication that Lucy was ever received as a member. And it may be that while the session was willing to extend to her the right of baptism, it was not willing to extend to her the privilege of membership in the church. If this was the case, the session had a change of heart very shortly.

On September 19, 1824, less than two years later, it received Juda, a servant, into full membership of the church upon profession of faith.

A list of all slaves known to have been members of Bethesda, together with other information about them follows:

Juda, a servant, received Sept. 19, 1824; dismissed Oct. 17, 1834

Cresy, a servant, received March 13, 1826

Frederick, a servant of George Simpson, received May 15, 1853.

Harriet, a servant of John Siddle, received April 22, 1860.

After the Civil War, almost all Negroes who were members of "white" churches withdrew to form churches of their own. There were a few cases, however, where Negroes continued as members of "white" churches; and there were fewer cases still in which Negroes joined "white" churches. In the case of Bethesda, there was one Negro member, Maria Hubbard, who joined the church on October 17, 1870, more than five years after the war had ended. (The Yanceyville Church had a Negro woman join its membership in 1912.)

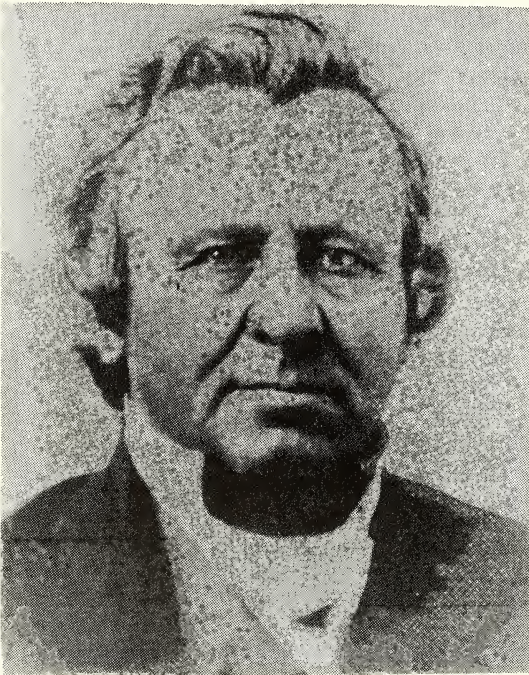
Slaves not only attended Bethesda and joined its membership, but many of them were buried at the rear of the cemetery in a section reserved for slaves. Most of these graves were marked only with large stones that bore no writing. Many of these stones have since been moved, but sunken places in the ground still mark the location of some of these graves.

Not all Negroes buried in the cemetery, however, have been slaves. Several are known to have been buried in the cemetery since the days of slavery. One of these was Mrs. James Williamson Williamson who died in June 1897. Her son, Mack, a graduate of Michigan State, and now a resident of Toledo, Ohio, maintains a lively interest in the work of the Bethesda Congregation and visits the church whenever he is in the community. The present minister and author of this volume remembers very clearly the first time he saw Mr. Williamson at one of the worship services. It was on May 22, 1960, the Sunday the congregation met to vote on whether or

not to revive the Lord's Acre Program with a view to raising money to build a manse and call a full-time minister. When I looked around the pulpit that morning and saw Mr. Williamson in the audience, not knowing at that time who he was, my first thought was "Lord, I know he has a right to be here, but why did it have to be the morning the congregation is meeting to chart the future course of the church?" Fortunately, my worries were in vain. The congregation received Mr. Williamson most cordially that morning as always.

Mr. Williamson's interest in Bethesda, however, extends beyond an occasional visit with the congregation. To aid with the upkeep of the cemetery, he has given five shares of preferred stock in the Southern Railway to Bethesda, and this stock pays a quarterly dividend, usually, of \$1.25 into the cemetery fund.

REV. JACOB DOLL



Mr. Doll was born in Martinsburg, West Va., on June 27, 1812. After his studies at Jefferson College, Canonsburg, Penn., he spent several years as a merchant. Later, he enrolled in Union Seminary, Richmond, Va., where he graduated in 1841. He labored in Winchester Presbytery, Va., as a missionary for two years, and then accepted a call to the Oxford and Lewisburg Churches, which were then in Orange Presbytery. It was in this pastorate that he was ordained on July 8, 1843. His next pastorate was at Milton and Gilead and was begun in 1849. After accepting the call of the Bethesda Church in the latter part of 1850, for his services two Sundays per month, he served the Milton, Gilead, and Bethesda Churches until the end of 1853. The next three years found him teaching at Madison, N. C., and serving as a Stated Supply of the

Snow Creek Church. In 1857 he accepted a call to the Yanceyville and Griens Churches. He continued in this relationship until he accepted the call of the Bethesda Church in November of 1866. With his residence in Yanceyville, he served the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches until he moved to Reidsville in December of 1874. After the organization of the Reidsville Church on January 15, 1875 (more about this later), he became the Stated Supply of the Reidsville Church and continued serving Bethesda, a relationship in which he continued, until his death on April 27, 1878.

His death occurred at a meeting of Orange Presbytery in Newbern, N. C.; and a Synod Memorial gives these details: "Rev. Jacob Doll was in attendance upon the last Spring meeting, in the month of April, of Orange Presbytery, in what seemed to be his usual health and vigour; opened the Presbytery as its last Moderator with the customary sermon and other exercises, and attended from day to day its sessions. He had been its Stated Clerk for many years, and occupied his place, interested and active about as usual, until Saturday; when about noon, feeling unwell, he went to his lodgings and a few minutes before dinner, by a sudden

stroke and almost instantaneously, his heart ceased its pulsations, and his spirit was absent from the body and present with the Lord."

Mr. Doll's body was laid to rest in the Bethesda cemetery on April 30, 1878, with "a vast congregation" present for the service conducted by Rev. T. M. Dalton, whose sermon text was taken from II Timothy 4:6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." The inscription on his tombstone in the Bethesda Cemetery reads:

"In Memory of
Jacob Doll"
"Born June 27, 1812
Died April 27, 1878"
For many years he was
the beloved pastor of the
church at this place"
" 'None knew him but to love him
None nammed him but to priase.' "
"This stone erected by a
number of his friends in grateful
remembrance of his labors."

With the exception of Dr. Craig about whom we shall hear more in a moment, Mr. Doll was the most active pastor beyond the level of the local church that Bethesda has ever had. He served as Stated Clerk of Orange Presbytery for many years; and for about twenty years he was the Stated Clerk of the Synod of N. C. He did such an excellent job in the latter capacity that he received special recognition and approval from the General Assembly. Mr. Doll served efficiently for a number of years as a member of the Board of Trustees of Davidson College. His election to this position occurred at a meeting of Orange Presbytery in the Bethesda Church on April 5, 1871.

A Memorial in the Synod's Minutes for October, 1878, pays high tribute to Mr. Doll as a man, friend, associate, minister of the Gospel, and Stated Clerk. Part of this memorial reads:

"As a minister of the Gospel he was practical, solemn, able, earnest, and at times exceedingly impressive: his sermons gave evidence of clear views of gospel truth As our Stated Clerk, he was punctual, accurate, and neat in all the detail of this office — so familiar with the routine of ecclesiastical courts, with its facts and precedents — so ready and accomodating and cheerful to give information, that all felt free to ask him on any point, and easy and safe while acting upon his suggestions But it is as a man, a friend, associate, and brother, that we feel words cannot adequately express the emotions of our hearts He was so kind, so cheerful, so genial, and sincere — he seemed to take to his heart every brother — so perfectly free from guile, from envy and from all uncharitableness — his Christian spirit, his tender heart, his ready smile, his cheerful, good humor, all blend together in almost every thought of him, so that every memory of him is a sad, sweet vision of blended joy and smiles and tears."

Mr. Doll was called to his first Bethesda pastorate in November of 1850. When he arrived on the field, the membership of the church numbered forty. Mr. Pickard, his predecessor, had not been well in the latter years of his ministry at Bethesda; consequently, the membership had declined sharply by the time Mr. Doll arrived. Mr. Doll's labors for the three years of this first pastorate were most fruitful; and, when he left the field in November of 1853, a total of twenty-seven members had been added, the majority of them by profession of faith. It is not surprising, therefore, that the congregation voted for his return when he became available for a second pastorate.

Mr. Doll was called to this second pastorate at Bethesda on August 23, 1866, with his installation occurring on November 11, 1866. The charge to the pastor at this service was given by the Rev. J. W. Montgomery. This second pastorate covered a period of almost twelve years, and extended to the time of Mr. Doll's death on April 27, 1878. At the beginning of this pastorate, the membership of the church was sixty three; and in the years that followed a total of twenty-four members were added, eight of whom planned to join the Reidsville Church when it was organized. Several other members also transferred their membership from Bethesda to the Reidsville Church at the time of its organization on January 15, 1875, with the result that when Mr. Doll died, the Bethesda membership had dropped to number only forty-six.

When death came to Mr. Doll, he had been affiliated with Bethesda as pastor for fifteen of his thirty-seven years as a minister; and it was indeed appropriate that his body should be laid to rest in the Bethesda Cemetery.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF REIDSVILLE

The organization of this church occurred on January 15, 1875, under the leadership of the Rev. Jacob Doll. There were twenty-two charter members, thirteen of whom transferred from Bethesda. The names of the twenty-two charter members appear below, with an asterisk by the names of those who once belonged to Bethesda.

*Robert Blackwell	*Mrs. Mary S. Richardson
*Mrs. Susan A. Blackwell	*Miss Anna J. Richardson
Mrs. Mary A. Crofton	*Dr. Robert H. Scales
*Capt. James A. Dalton	*Mrs. Jane Scales
Col. James Irvin	Mrs. Mary V. Scales
Mrs. Margaret T. Johnston	Dr. Jefferson Scales
Mrs. Lucy D. Irvin	*George Tomkins
*Miss Mary T. Johnson	*Mrs. Frances Tomkins
Mrs. Martha Locke	Mrs. Sue H. Williams
*Robert P. Richardson, Sr.	*Miss Sallie A. McCallister

Dr. Robert H. Scales, former elder at Bethesda, and Col. James Irvin, former elder at Wentworth, were installed as the first elders of this church on the day of its organization. The service of organization was held in a church building which the congregation had erected, which indicates that the group had been hard at work for some time prior to the organizational meeting.

The part played by Bethesda in the organization of the Reidsville Church is reflected in the Bethesda Session Minutes for December 27, 1874. These minutes read in part:

"Whereas a new church is about to be organized at Reidsville, N. C.; therefore resolved that those persons who attached themselves to this church at the several meetings of the session in Reidsville with the view of joining the church at that place when organized have permission to do so with the exception of Mr. Joseph H. Billing and Capt. James A. Allen. The names of those persons to whom permission is given are: Capt. James Dalton, Robert P. Richardson, Jr., Mary Turner Johnston, Sallie Ann McCallister, Susan A. Blackwell, Frances Tomkins, George Tomkins, Miss Annie J. Richardson".

(No reason is given for refusing to transfer Mr. Billing and Capt. Allen, but other sessional minutes reveal that Capt. Allen was under investigation by the session for charges of intemperance.)

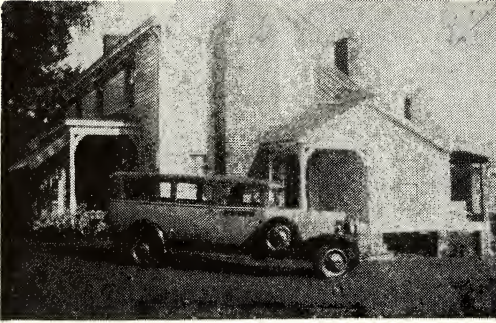
Additional sessional minutes from the December 27, 1874 meeting read:

“Whereas the session has heard that certain members of this church living in the vicinity of Reidsville desire to attach themselves to the new organization, therefore resolved that the following members have permission to do so: Doctor Robert H. Scales, Mrs. Jane Scales, Mrs. Annie Montgomery, Mrs. Mary Mebane, Miss Maggie J. Montgomery, Mr. Robert P. Richardson, Mrs. Mary Richardson, and Mr. Robert Blackwell”.

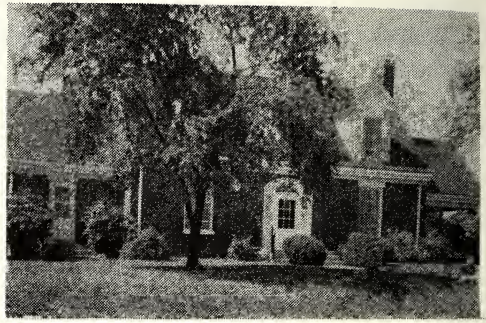
(Mrs. Annie Montgomery, Miss Maggie J. Montgomery, and Mrs. Mary Mebane failed to exercise immediately the permission granted them; and it was not until Sept. 29, 1879, that they united with the Reidsville Church.) In the years that followed there were a number of other persons transferring from Bethesda to Reidsville, so that a rather large percentage of the early membership of the Reidsville Church was made up of former Bethesda members.

In view of the part played by the Bethesda members and session in the organization of this new church there is good reason to speak of Bethesda as “the Mother of the First Presbyterian Church of Reidsville”. It would be misleading, however, to imply that the Bethesda congregation and session as a whole in 1874 rejoiced in the organization of this new church. Mindful of the loss which Bethesda would suffer in members, in leadership and in financial support, the session was very reluctant, as reflected in the sessional minutes mentioned earlier, to give its blessings to this effort. It seems clear that the initiative for the organization came not from the Bethesda Session, but from members of the Bethesda Church, together with other Presbyterians living in the area, under the leadership and challenge of Mr. Doll. A reading of Mr. Doll’s Diary, now on deposit at the Historical Foundation in Montreat, reveals the keen interest which he had in the founding of the Reidsville Church. He gave considerable time to evangelistic work in Reidsville prior to the church’s organization and used the home of Dr. Robert Scales as a base of operation. By the time the church was organized, he had severed his relations with the Yanceyville Church and moved his residence to Reidsville, with a view to becoming pastor of this new church. From this point until the time of his death he continued to serve the Reidsville and Bethesda churches and gave half of his time to each of them. Mr. Doll’s good judgement in working to establish the Reidsville Church has been well verified by this church’s growth and record of service. At the end of 1964, the Reidsville Church reported a membership of 508 and total contributions of \$66,654. When a child prospers the mother rejoices, and the Bethesda Church is happy that her offspring has fared so well.

THE MATTER OF MANSES



1907-1927



1933-1965

Prior to the pastorates of Mr. Doll, the Bethesda ministers had been forced to provide their own homes although the Synod had recommended as early as 1765, that the churches do this. During the seventeen years that Mr. Doll lived in Yanceyville, first as pastor of the Yanceyville, Griers, and Gilead Churches, and then as pastor of the Yanceyville Church, he lived in the manse which had been given the Yanceyville Church in 1853, by Mr. George Williamson. This house, which stood on the same lot as the present Yanceyville manse, burned in about 1900. The original property given by Mr. Williamson included a house, a small office building, and a lot measuring 1.06 acres. When Mr. Williamson deeded this property, he carefully specified that should it ever cease to be used as a residence for the minister of the Yanceyville Church, it would revert to the original donor or his heirs. The house given by Mr. Williamson, a large two-story building, served as the manse for the Yanceyville group of churches (including Bethesda) during the pastorates of the Reverends Jacob Doll, W. R. Coppedge, J. M. Greenlee, W. K. Forsyth, N. B. Campbell, and part of the pastorate of the Rev. S. Hill Williamson, whose father had given the property. It was during Mr. Williamson's pastorate that the house burned in about 1900. Following the fire, Mr. and Mrs. Williamson moved into the small office building on the lot and continued to live there until the end of Mr. Williamson's pastorate in 1904.

The Yanceyville Church suffered a double loss in the fire; the loss included not only the house, but also all the minutes of the session up to this time.

In 1907 the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches and the Home Missions Committee of Presbytery joined in buying, for \$900, a house and a two-acre lot near the present Yanceyville Post Office (across from Kerr Hotel). Mr. I. K. Wright was appointed by the Bethesda Session to head up a committee to solicit funds for Bethesda's share of the cost. This house was also a two-story building (see picture), and it served as the pastor's residence during the pastorates of the Reverends H. L. Cathey, H. H. Cassady (Mr. Cassady moved to Ruffin to live during his final year), George Oldham, E. B. Thompson, and part of the pastorate of W. W. McMorries. (During his last years in Yanceyville, Mr. McMorries lived across the street in a smaller house owned by the Kerr Family.) This house and lot were sold to Miss Gertie Jones on July 13, 1927, for \$4,028.50.

The money from the sale of this property was placed in the Yanceyville Bank on interest and was called the Manse Fund, with the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches and Orange Presbytery each claiming one-third interest in it. With the threat of a depression being the chief subject of conversation, the churches were

uncertain about the advisability of trying to build a new manse at this time. The depression came, and the churches were more reluctant than ever to build; but the Presbytery's Home Missions Committee made a decision which prompted them to undertake a building program immediately. According to the Rev. Roy Whitley, pastor at the time, "The Presbytery was about to withdraw its share of the Manse Fund from the bank since it was not being used and because the Home Missions Committee was broke". The two churches quickly let the contract for the building of the manse on the lot owned by the Yanceyville Church, and construction began at once. But at this point a new crisis arose. The local bank, like so many others in the nation, was forced to cease business operations until it could prove that it was able to meet the claims of all of its depositors. Realizing the importance of the bank to the community, all depositors except one agreed to settle their accounts for fifty cents on the dollar in order that the bank might re-open. Each depositor was given an interest in certain securities and notes to the extent of the balance due him from the bank, and eventually the bank was able to repay practically all that was due. But that did not help the churches at this point in meeting their financial crisis caused by the reduction of the manse fund by half. After the \$2,000 left in the Manse Fund was applied to the cost of the building, there was still a balance due of \$1,800. Seeing little hope of paying off so large a debt, the officers of the two churches called all the creditors together to explain the situation and to seek a compromise settlement. The creditors were sympathetic with the plight of the churches, and they agreed to settle all accounts for fifty cents on the dollar. This reduced the debt to \$900, and the churches proceeded to pay it off. In order to pay off its share of the debt, the Bethesda congregation borrowed at least \$425 from the bank of Reidsville, with the women borrowing \$100 of this amount in their name in August, 1933. The congregation had a long struggle in repaying this loan, and it was not until December, 1935, that it was fully repaid. Part of the loan was repaid with money received from the Yanceyville Bank as it paid off its creditors; and the majority of the balance was repaid by the Women of the Church, who were able to raise money from suppers and other projects even during the depression. An annual gift of Mrs. R. L. Dibrell of Danville, Va., to the church through Miss Hester Womack was also applied to this debt until it was retired.

Numerous repairs and additions have been made to the above manse since the time of its completion in 1933, the most important one being the installation of a central heating system in 1946, at a cost of \$1,800.

Ministers living in this house while serving the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches have been the Reverends Roy Whitley, Herman Womeldorf, Cecil Callis, and W. E. Lytch.

On May 9, 1965, the Yanceyville congregation voted to pay the Bethesda congregation \$5,000 for whatever equity it had in this manse. The Bethesda congregation voted to accept this settlement, applying the \$5,000 to the cost of the construction of a new manse at Bethesda (more about this later).

DAVID IRVIN CRAIG

Shortly after the death of the Rev. Jacob Doll in April of 1878, the Rev. D. I. Craig was called to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Reidsville; and in July of 1878, he was engaged as the Stated Supply of the Bethesda Church for one Sunday per month. He continued as the pastor of the Reidsville Church for forty-three years, but his services as Stated Supply at Bethesda were limited to eight years and ended in May 1886.

Mr. Craig was born in Orange County, N. C., on February 11, 1849. After his studies at Davidson College, he enrolled at Columbia Theological Seminary, then located at Columbia, S. C. (now Decatur, Ga.), where he graduated in 1878. He was ordained to the ministry by Orange Presbytery on June 1, 1879. In 1910, an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree was bestowed upon him by Davidson College. For a number of years he was a Trustee of Davidson, as well as of Union Seminary in Richmond. He served as the Stated Clerk of Orange Presbytery for thirty years, and as Stated Clerk of Synod for twenty-five years. In 1918 he was elected Moderator of the Synod.

Dr. Craig maintained a keen interest in Home Missions on both the Presbytery and Synod levels throughout his lifetime, and he served for many years on the Home Mission Committees of both groups. His work on these committees helped to qualify him for his many writings on historical matters, including The Development of the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina.

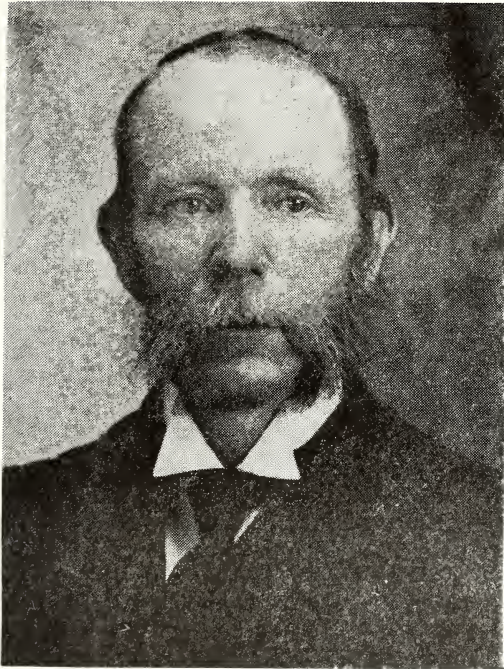
From 1921 to 1925, he was Pastor Emeritus of the First Church, Reidsville. His death occurred in Reidsville on February 9, 1925.

Dr. Craig was a man of many gifts, and the First Church of Reidsville made great progress under his leadership. His relation with Bethesda, however, was not a fruitful one. Whether the fault was with the times or with the arrangement as Stated Supply is not clear; probably, it was a little of each. In the eight years Dr. Craig served, there were only twelve additions to the church; and the membership declined from forty-six at the beginning of his ministry to thirty-three at the end. Financially, the difficulties that began after the war continued to increase. In 1885, a salary of \$150 was promised Dr. Craig for the year; but only \$95 of this amount was paid. When he terminated his services with the church in 1886, the church still owed him \$48.35. A settlement proposed by Dr. Craig, described earlier in this chapter, was accepted by the session.

There were at least two other indications that the church did not fare well under the arrangement with Dr. Craig. One was the appearance of Elder Anthony S. Williamson on the floor of Presbytery on May 23, 1883, to speak about the interests of Bethesda. Second, was the minutes of the session for several meetings in this same year. A recurring entry was "After a free conversation concerning the interests of Bethesda and no further business, the session adjourned with prayer."

In 1886, the session renewed its requests to Presbytery for the continuation of Dr. Craig's services as Stated Supply; but the Presbytery, taking note of the unfruitfulness of the arrangement, voted to deny the request. And Bethesda was forced to look in another direction for pastoral leadership.

WALTER RALEIGH COPPEDGE



After Presbytery denied Bethesda's request for the services of Mr. Craig another year as Stated Supply, the church engaged the Rev. Archibald Currie as a temporary supply. He served for only a few months. In 1887, the Bethesda, Yanceyville, and Griers Churches united in calling as pastor the Rev. W. R. Coppedge. Accepting the call, he served these churches until 1889. During this pastorate in Caswell County he was elected to serve one term as the Moderator of Orange Presbytery.

Born in Lynchburg, Va., on August 1, 1851, but reared in Bedford, Va., Mr. Coppedge received his AB and MA degrees from Hampden Sydney College. In 1877 he was graduated from Union Seminary, then located at Hamden Sydney College; and in this same year he was married to Miss Elizabeth Duffy of Newbern, N. C. Five sons were born to them.

Before coming to Caswell County, he was a resident of Floyd County, Va., where, in addition to serving as pastor of two churches, he established Oxford Academy and helped to prepare a number of young men for college and the ministry.

Concerning his labors in Caswell County, it is not known how he fared in his work at the Griers and Yanceyville Churches (the Yanceyville Sessional Minutes prior to 1900 were burned), but it is clear from the records of Bethesda that he had a struggle on his hands to save the church from death. (It requires a good doctor just to keep some patients alive!) When he came to Bethesda, the church reported a membership of only twenty-one; and in his first year as pastor, the church was able to pay him only \$76.65 on a promised salary of \$150. (This was during the Cleveland Depression.) In the three years that followed, the church took on some new life with the addition of twenty members; but it was in need of many more members and of much greater financial support before it could claim to be in a healthy state.

Mr. Coppedge went from Caswell County to Graham, N. C., where he served from 1890 to 1895 as pastor of the Graham Church. In 1895, he moved to Richmond County, N. C., where he continued to live until his death on April 10, 1927. During his thirty-one years in Richmond County he served his fellowman in a variety of ways. For fourteen years he was Superintendent of County Schools; and throughout the thirty-one years, he served as pastor of a number of different churches. Sometime during his stay in Richmond County, the Doctor of Divinity Degree was conferred upon him by Davidson College.

THE REV. J. M. GREENLEE

After the departure of Mr. Coppedge at the end of 1889, the church was vacant until the arrival of the Rev. J. M. Greenlee early in 1892. The last pastor to serve the church in the period under consideration in this chapter (1854-1893), Mr. Greenlee remained with the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches until November 1, 1893.

Born in 1847, he attended Davidson College, and was then a farmer and businessman in McDowell County, N. C. for about fourteen years. Ordained by Concord Presbytery in 1890, he came to the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches from the Turkey Cove Church. After leaving Caswell County, he returned to McDowell County and was without a charge for most of the remaining years of his life. He died in Richmond, Va., in February of 1923.

During his short stay with the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches, five members were received at Bethesda. One of these was Miss Ida Neighbors, who has been a member of Bethesda longer than any living person today. She united with the church by profession of faith on August 16, 1893. (Until her death on April 9, 1965, Mrs. Bettie Womack was the oldest member on the roll, chronologically. At the time of her death she was 98½ years old.)

DEACONS ORDAINED BETWEEN 1854 and 1893

- William P. Montgomery; ordained a deacon June 20, 1858.
Anthony S. Williamson; ordained June 20, 1858; ordained an elder Jan. 25, 1863.
Dr. John L. Williamson; ordained Oct. 23, 1859; ordained an elder, Jan. 25, 1863.
Robert W. Montgomery; ordained Oct. 23, 1859; ordained an elder, July 12, 1863.
Antiochus Boswell; ordained August 27, 1876; died June 16, 1885.
Thomas F. Williamson; ordained Aug. 27, 1876; dismissed to Winston, May 28, 1882.
Andrew P. Orr; ordained July 27, 1884; ordained an elder, Oct. 25, 1908; died 1908.
J. B. Siddle; ordained Oct. 13, 1889; died 1907.
John T. Vincent, ordained Oct. 13, 1889; died July 17, 1903.

ELDERS ORDAINED BETWEEN 1854 and 1893

- Joseph S. Blackwell; ordained May 10, 1854; later moved to Stokes County, N. C.
Robert S. Watt; ordained May 10, 1854; dismissed to Yanceyville, Nov. 28, 1875.
William P. Watt; ordained January 25, 1863.
Anthony S. Williamson; ordained January 25, 1863; died July 7, 1888; Clerk of Session_ 1879-1884.
Dr. John L. Williamson, Physician; ordained January 25, 1863.
Robert A. ontgomery; ordained July 12, 1863.
Dr. Samuel E. Bracken, Physician; ordained August 27, 1876; died May 8, 1886.
Ezekiel J. Orr; ordained August 27, 1876; died May 23, 1915; Clerk of Session, 1885-1903.
Thomas C. Neal; ordained June 22, 1884; died February 10, 1919; Clerk of Session, 1906-1911.
Dr. J. F. Badgett, Physician; ordained October 13, 1889; died 1933.

Reference should be made also to three other men, ordained earlier, and mentioned in the previous chapter, but spending much of their time as elders in the years from 1854-1893. These men were Joshua Butler, Stephen Neal and Dr. Robert H. Scales.

One of the leading elders of his day was Mr. Ezekiel J. Orr. Many of his active years as an elder were spent in the period to be considered in the next chapter, but since he was ordained in the period under consideration in this chapter, it is appropriate to enter at this point a memorial to him found in the sessional minutes.

Memorial of E. J. Orr:

“Ezekiel Jones Orr was born at the old Orr homestead in Caswell County, N. C., on November 17, 1823; and died suddenly at the home of his daughter Mrs. Numa Wright in Winston-Salem, N. C. on Sunday morning May 23, 1915, being in the ninety-second year of his age. Mr. Orr was the eldest son of the children of Jessie Orr, who also lived to the great age of eighty-nine years and his brother, Andrew and sister Rosa both lived more than four-score years while the eldest of the family, Miss Eliza, is still living at the great age of ninety-four years. The home of Mr. Orr was near the old church he loved so well, Bethesda, which was formerly the home of Rev. John H. Pickard. After the death of his wife, who was Miss Annie J. Foust, and the marriage of his two daughters, the only children, Mrs. J. S. Cobb and Mrs. Numa Wright, he left the old homeplace and lived most happily with his daughters — first with one and then the other — in Durham and Winston-Salem, N. C. He left Durham, N. C., on the day before his death and reached Winston-Salem, N. C., in apparent good health and in fine spirit and he was bright and cheerful when he retired for the night. But before the dawn of the morning he was found quietly and peacefully passing away from earth into the other world and he gently fell asleep in Jesus. For many years Mr. Orr was the leading ruling elder of Bethesda Church, having the love and confidence of all the people, and he retained this position until his death. He was a devoted husband and father, a true friend and neighbor, a tried and faithful Christian, a high toned gentleman and highly esteemed by all who knew him. He was not a demonstrative man in the manner of his words, but was of a modest and retiring disposition, a meek and quiet spirit which God says is of great price. He was a well informed man and being a constant reader even in his old age, he kept well abreast of the current topics of the times. He retained fully his powers of mind and body to the very end, and being mellowed by old age and sanctified by the grace of God he was a beautiful picture of the hoary head as a crown of glory being found in the way of righteousness. He often expressed the desire that he might leave this world without protracted sickness and trouble to his loved ones and he had his desire for no one but his Saviour, was with him when the summons came and he sweetly fell asleep and passed away to be forever with the Lord. His mortal remains were laid beside his wife in the old Bethesda churchyard to wait a glorious resurrection. Soldier of Christ well done. Praise be Thy new employ and while eternal ages rush, but in thy Saviour joy

D. I. Craig, G. W. Oldham, E. A. Allison, Dr. J. F. Badgette, T. C. Neal.

CHAPTER V

THE DAWNING OF A BRIGHTER DAY

1894-1931

In dealing with the years from 1854 to 1893, we saw the church go from a time of comparative strength to a point approaching death. Near the end of this period the membership of the church had sunk to an all-time low of twenty-one, and the church was having great difficulty "keeping its head above water" financially. A dark cloud of discouragement, no doubt, hung low and heavy over the heads and hearts of the congregation.

The situation did not change suddenly or dramatically in 1894, and the years that followed had their share of problems. The year 1894, however, did witness the first of a series of events that were to usher in a brighter day. Among the constructive developments of this period were an inheritance of \$175 from the will of I. B. Siddle; the organization of the Sunday School, the Women's Missionary Society, and the Young People's League; an increase in church membership, with the figure reaching eighty-nine by 1931; the construction of five Sunday School rooms; and extensive improvements to the church sanctuary.

INHERITANCE FROM I. B. SIDDLÉ

On November 16, 1885, Mr. Isaac Bedford Siddle, a member of Bethesda, drew up a will that resulted in considerable financial aid to the church in 1894, the year that the will was probated. This will included a generous bequest to Bethesda of \$175. (Mr. Siddle's will also bequeathed \$75 each to three of Bethesda's neighbors: Pleasant Grove Primitive Baptist, Trinity Baptist, and Camp Springs Methodist Churches.)

In order to receive this money, the Bethesda Congregation elected trustees for the first time in its history. The three men elected by the congregation on March 31, 1894, were Dr. J. F. Badgett, J. T. Vincent, and E. J. Orr.

The money from Mr. Siddle's will was set aside by the officers for use in repairing the church. A building committee consisting of J. C. Allison, E. J. Orr, and J. T. Vincent was chosen by the congregation in March, 1896, to supervise the repairs. These repairs are not described: most likely, they involved painting the church and repairing the roof.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Another development of this period helping to usher in a brighter day for the church was the organization of the Sunday School. The Sunday School may have been organized before 1894, but it was not until this year that it was mentioned in the session's statistical report to Presbytery. The reported enrollment in 1894 was thirty. Growth was very slow at first, with only thirty-three members reported as late as 1920; but after the building of five Sunday School rooms in 1926, the enrollment grew rapidly for the next few years, with 106 members reported for 1929. Since 1929, the growth has been gradual, with an enrollment of 152 reported at the end of 1963.

In the early years of the Sunday School when there were no class rooms, all classes had to be held either in the sanctuary or out-of-doors. Some of the classes met outside even in the winter time! The five rooms built in 1926 were a most welcome addition, both to the teachers and the pupils. (The present educational building, erected in 1944, along with the sanctuary, includes seven classrooms plus other facilities.)

There is no written record of the persons serving through the years as Sunday School Superintendents, but some of those known to have served in this capacity are E. A. Allison; Dr. J. F. Badgett; R. L. Neal, Sr.; T. S. Neal; Charles Law, Sr.; Francis Law (probably longer than any other); Craig Stanley; James Blackwell, Jr.; W. H. Hatchett, Jr.; David Wright, Jr.; Harvey Chaney; Richard Page; Douglass Harrelson; Van Daniel, Jr.; and David Neal (two different occasions). In the early years of the Sunday School the superintendent was elected by the entire adult membership of the Sunday School, but in recent years this appointment has been made by the session.

The number of teachers serving faithfully and effectively in the Sunday School through the years is beyond calculation. Some of those with unusually long terms of service include Miss Hester Womack (forty years in Junior Class); Miss Cora Harralson (thirty-five years in Young People's Class); Miss Bessie Wright (Primaries); and Mrs. Dora Lillard (Beginners).

Most additions to the church on profession of faith in recent years have come through the Sunday School, and the probability is that an even greater percentage will come from this source in the future. The Sunday School is indeed a vital part of the church program, and a great debt of gratitude is due all who have contributed to this part of the church's work.

W. K. FORSYTH AND NED BURNS CAMPBELL

A long list of ministers served Bethesda for varying lengths of time from 1894 to 1931; and the other developments of this period helping to usher in a brighter day are so closely interwoven with the leadership of these ministers that we do well from this point forward in this chapter to consider the ministers and the noteworthy developments together. The ministers of this period were W. K. Forsyth, Ned B. Campbell, S. Hill Williamson, S. C. Smith, H. L. Cathey, H. H. Cassady, George W. Oldham, Erwin B. Thompson, and W. W. McMorries.

William Kenneth Forsyth, a native of Scotland, served the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches as a student supply minister during the summer months of 1894, and the work of both churches was greatly strengthened by his labors. After completing his studies at Louisville Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and serving a pastorate at Pineville, Ky., Mr. Forsyth died at the age of thirty-four in Greensboro, N. C.

On March 31, 1895, the Bethesda, Yanceyville, and Stoney Creek Congregations extended a call to Mr. Ned Burns Campbell, a senior at Union Seminary, Richmond, Va., to become their pastor following his graduation. Accepting the call, Mr. Campbell began his work about June of that year. He was ordained by Orange Presbytery at Bethesda on September 25, 1895; and his installation took place at this church on the same date. This was a short-lived pastorate: Mr. Campbell resigned in the early part of 1897. Three members were received at Bethesda during his pastorate, including two who are still on the active roll: Mr. R. L. Neal, Sr. and Miss Rebecca Neal.

Born in Martinsburg, W. Va., on March 31, 1867, Mr. Campbell earned his college degree at Hampden Sydney College. His B.D. was earned from Union Seminary. Mr. Campbell went from Caswell County to Wilmington Presbytery in 1897, but because of sickness was unable to work for the next year. He was in Roan Presbytery (now Appomatox) from 1899-1902; in East Hanover Presbytery (Va.) from 1902-1906; and in Greenbrier Presbytery (West Va.) from 1906-1910. From 1912, until the time of his death on October 25, 1930, he was infirm and resided in Baltimore, Md.

SAMUEL HILL WILLIAMSON

Bethesda had fared well in earlier years under the leadership of the Rev. J. W. Montgomery, a native of Caswell County. Now, following the departure of Mr. Campbell, the church turned to another native of Caswell County, the Rev. S. Hill Williamson, to provide the church with ministerial leadership. Mr. Williamson was born in Yanceyville on November 25, 1859, the son of Mr. and Mrs. George Williamson. His parents were charter members of the Yanceyville church; and his father, as mentioned earlier, gave the lot on which the present Yanceyville manse is located.

Mr. S. Hill Williamson graduated from the Naval Academy in 1881, and served in the Navy from 1881-1885. For the next several years he was a teacher; and in 1895, he enrolled at Union Seminary, Richmond, as a candidate for the ministry. After two years study at the Seminary, he asked Orange Presbytery for ordination under the "extraordinary clause", being unable to complete three years of seminary work because of his age and other factors. He was licensed to preach on January 3, 1897, and began his ministry shortly thereafter as the State Supply of the Bethesda, Yanceyville, Roxboro, and Stoney Creek Churches. He was ordained at the Bethlehem Church by Orange Presbytery on September 9, 1897. Bethesda promised him \$100 per year for one-fourth of his time, but it appears doubtful that the full amount was ever paid. In 1900, for example, the church reported having paid him only \$63.50 for the year.

His labors at Bethesda were most fruitful, with about thirty-seven members added to the church during his pastorate. At the beginning of his ministry there were thirty-eight members on the roll; at the end, sixty-four. Among the members added were the following: John Allison; Edward Stanley; Ada Blackwell; Nannie Neighbors; Mrs. Dora Blackwell Lillard; Mrs. Mary W. Roberson; Edna Gwynn; Miss Bessie Wright; Mrs. Josephine Orr Jones; Yancey Blackwell; Elizabeth Neal; Eliza Alice Blackwell; Robert Orr; Thomas H. Rice; Lelia Stanley; Algernon S. Neal; Eliza Ann Orr; Eugene Orr; Floyd Mills Blackwell; Albert Thomas Lillard; Marnie Wait Powell; John Powell; Mrs. Eliza Jane Blackwell; Felix S. Blackwell; Joseph E. Ware; and Miss Ermer Shelton.

Many of these joined the church in connection with an outstanding revival held at Bethesda by the Rev. William Black in October of 1902. For many years Mr. Black was general evangelist for the Synod of N. C.; and many souls were added to the Kingdom as a result of his services.

Mr. Williamson was officially dismissed from the Yanceyville group of churches on August 29, 1904, to assume the pastorate of the Front Street Presbyterian Church, Statesville, N. C. He remained with this church for only two years. From 1906-1919, he was pastor of the Euphronia and Pocket Churches (then in Fayetteville Presbytery but now in Orange). His last pastorate was at the Booneville and New Hope Churches in East Mississippi Presbytery from 1919-1927. About 1927, after becoming infirm, he returned to Yanceyville, where he died on Jan. 23, 1930.

Mr. Williamson was married to Miss Sadie Wharton of Ruffin, N. C. After Mr. Williamson's death, Mrs. Williamson was married to Mr. D. G. Watkins of Yanceyville. She died in 1953.

S. C. SMITH AND HERMAN L. CATHEY

Following the resignation of Mr. Williamson, Bethesda joined with several other churches in calling as pastor the Rev. J. L. McLain of Concord, N. C., but the call was declined. The churches then engaged the services of the Rev. Samuel Smith, a son of the Griens Church, who began work in October, 1905. Because of poor health, he was unable to continue in this field; and he left for San Antonio, Texas in April, 1906. In San Antonio he helped to organize and build a new church; and, when

he died on January 27, 1909, at the age of 39, his congregation felt that he had probably over-exerted himself for one whose health was so poor.

Bethesda was vacant for a long time between the end of Mr. Smith's work in 1906, and the beginning of the ministry of Mr. H. L. Cathey in March, 1908. Born near Charlotte, N. C. on July 1, 1878, Mr. Cathey was a graduate of Davidson College. At the time he began to supply the Bethesda, Yanceyville, Griers, and Pleasant Grove Churches he was a first-year student at Union Seminary, Richmond. Rather than return to the Seminary in the fall of 1908, Mr. Cathey took a year out of his studies to continue serving the four churches as a student supply. He was licensed by Orange Presbytery on October 6, 1908. Returning to the Seminary in the fall of 1909, he continued his studies until graduation in 1911. Beginning in 1919, he served for ten years as the assistant pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg, Va. He was ordained by Montgomery Presbytery on April 25, 1912. Other pastorates followed in Little Rock, Ark.; Richmond, W. Va.; Petersburg, W. Va.; and Glasgow, Va. Mr. Cathey died on December 2, 1960, and was buried at Charlotte, N. C.

Twelve members were received at Bethesda during his brief ministry; and among these were Mrs. I. L. Harrelson; Miss Edna Womack; Miss Hester Womack; Mrs. Logan Harrelson; Miss Iola Walker; Mr. Logan Harrelson; R. L. Mitchell; Mr. Charles Law, Sr.; Brackin Watlington; Daniel Wright, Jr.; Earle Blackwell; Henry Pruitt; and perhaps Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr.

Mr. Cathey was single at the time he served Bethesda. And the story goes that "he lost his heart to one of Bethesda's fair ladies", but her heart went to someone else. Indications are, however, that Mr. Cathey recovered because he was married in 1913, to Miss Estelle Clark in Lynchburg, Va. Mrs. Cathey died in 1959. No children survived them.

HENRY HARRISON CASSADY

The years from 1894-1931, witnessed the dawning of a brighter day in the life of Bethesda; but this is not to say that these years were without their shadows and hardships. One of the shadows of this period was the inability of the churches in the grouping to hold a minister for very long. In the thirty-seven years of the period under consideration in this chapter, the churches had no less than eight different ministers, with five of them remaining with the churches less than two years each. And more damaging than the rapid turnover of ministers, no doubt, was the fact that for nine of the thirty-seven years the Bethesda Church was reported as being vacant. In spite of this drawback, however, the church did make some progress in moving toward a brighter day.

Another of the short-term ministers of this period was the Rev. H. H. Cassady, who arrived on the field in April of 1911, and departed in March 1913. Mr. Cassady was born on January 31, 1870, at Why Not, Randolph County, N. C. He attended Davidson College and Union Seminary, and was ordained by Roan Presbytery (Va.), on Sept. 12, 1906. Before coming to Caswell County, he served in Stuart, Va.; Hazard, Ky.; and Lexington, Ky. From Caswell County, he went to Dallas, N. C., after which he entered the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. (Northern). Returning to the Presbyterian Church U. S. (Southern) three years later, he served six different pastorates in N. C. before retiring to a residence near Davidson, N. C. He died on Jan. 18, 1942, and was survived at the time by a wife and seven children.

According to a memorial in the minutes of the Synod of N. C. (Sept. 1942), "He was a man of deep and abiding faith in Christ as the Savior; a man of earnest and perserving prayer. He was missionary minded, and with a spirit of willing sacrifice he labored diligently in widely scattered and difficult Home Mission fields, with success."

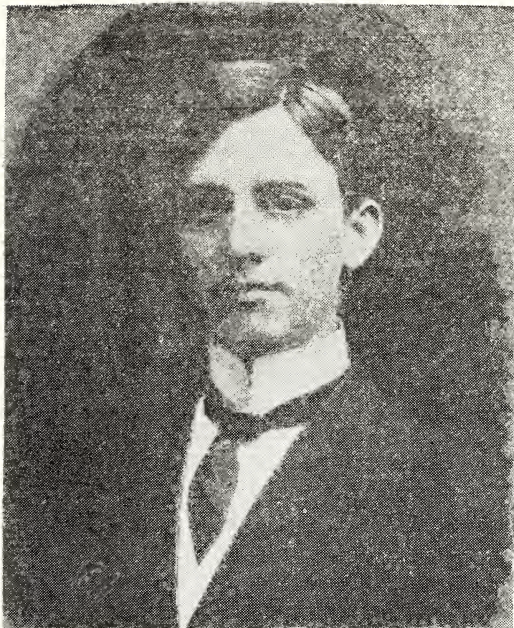
In his Caswell County ministry, Mr. Cassady did a good work at each of the four churches. Fifteen members were added at Bethesda during his stay. They were as follows: T. C. Stanley; W. J. Pettigrew; E. B. Blackwell; Ada Foster; Reid Blackwell; R. L. Womack; Willie Womack; Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Jones; Mrs. J. I. King (nee Nettie Blackwell); Mrs. Beulah Harrelson Neighbors; Mrs. Jennie P. Orr; Mrs. Mary Nettie Pettigrew; Annah M. Law; and Elenor Law.

At the end of the church year in 1911, it was reported in presbytery's minutes that the membership of the Yanceyville Church had been doubled under his leadership. In April of 1912, Presbytery's Home Missions Committee noted with joy that the four churches had come to self-support, beginning with that church year, and that they would no longer look to the committee to help pay the minister's salary. Unfortunately, the joy was short-lived, for the churches had to return to the committee at the beginning of the very next church year to ask for aid.

Part of Mr. Cassady's evangelistic success was due to the assistance which he received from the county-wide revival meetings of the Rev. Norman Camp, an evangelist of Chicago, Ill. In addition to the services held in various churches throughout the county, Mr. Camp also held a series in the courthouse in Yanceyville. All of his services met with great success, including his series at Bethesda. One of the services at Bethesda was set aside especially for the "colored people", and for this service the regular members were asked to sit at the rear of the sanctuary in order that the visitors might occupy the front pews. The plan did not receive the whole-hearted endorsement of all the members, but fortunately there were no serious repercussions.

Another noteworthy effort of Mr. Cassady at Bethesda was the introduction of a new system of church finance, with a special view toward strengthening the church's support of benevolences. The General Assembly had earlier recommended that each local church use duplex envelopes to encourage giving to benevolences. One side of this envelope was for current expenses and the other for benevolences; and the hope was that each time a member contributed to current expenses he would also contribute to benevolences. The Bethesda Session gave its approval to this system in March of 1912; and at this same time Miss Bessie Wright was named to serve as Church Treasurer — a position which she filled most diligently for the next thirty-five years. This system of church finance was not without its merits; but, apparently, it did not work too well at Bethesda because another system was introduced a few years later during the pastorate of Mr. Oldham.

GEORGE WILLIS OLDHAM



Following the resignation of Mr. Cassady in March of 1913, the Rev. George Oldham arrived in Sept. of the same year to serve as Stated Supply of the Bethesda, Yanceyville, Griens, and Pleasant Grove Churches. With all four churches later calling him as pastor, the Bethesda call was extended on May 31, 1915, at a promised salary of \$400 per year. (The total salary promised by the four churches was \$800, but it is doubtful that it was ever paid in full for any of the years he served. One elder of this period said "Folks of this day thought salvation was free." Presbytery's Home Mission Committee supplemented the salary paid by the churches by about \$200 per year.) Mr. Oldham's affiliation with these churches continued until March of 1921.

Mr. Oldham was born on November 20, 1879, near Chapel Hill, N.C.

He received his A.B. degree from the University of North Carolina. As a student he gained fame as a star pitcher on the baseball team. (Mr. Oldham was a classmate of Mr. Tom Henderson of Yanceyville, and Mr. Henderson later wrote of teaming with Mr. Oldham to win the Caswell Tennis Championship in Doubles, played on a court near Cobb School.) After teaching school for several years Mr. Oldham entered Union Seminary, where he graduated in 1911. His first pastorate was at the Buffalo, Midway and Bessemer Churches, Greensboro, N. C. He came to Caswell County from Greensboro. After his seven-year pastorate in Caswell, he held pastorates in Kenansville, N. C., and Hot Springs, Va. From 1944, until his retirement in 1950, he was the pastor of the Jasper, Fla. Church.

His first marriage was to Miss Eula Kirkpatrick, who died in 1941. In 1946 he was married to Miss Mamie Montgomery who survives him. In 1963, after being in declining health for several years, he and Mrs. Oldham moved to the Greenwood Community in Rockingham County to be near relatives. Death came to Mr. Oldham on September 9, 1964; and he was buried at the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church near Chapel Hill, N. C.

Mr. Oldham's pastorate of seven years at Bethesda produced a number of significant accomplishments. Not least of these was the addition of sixteen members. Among these were the following: Mr. and Mrs. T. S. Law; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Sr.; T. C. Pettigrew; Mrs. Annie Neighbors; Mrs. Hurley Stanley (nee Bessie Lillard); Wharton Lillard; Mrs. Ollie Blackwell; Miss Cora Harralson; Sidney Neal; and perhaps Mrs. Henry Harralson and Mr. Francis Law.

Another significant accomplishment during Mr. Oldham's pastorate was the improvement of the church's stewardship program by the introduction for the first time of the Every Member Canvass. Previously, members had simply been given envelopes to encourage their giving; but under this new plan each member was asked to make a definite commitment as to the amount he or she would give during the year to help the church's total work. Financial records for the immediately suc-

ceeding years are scarce, but indications are that there was some improvement in the church's giving under the new system. (In 1920, when the church was engaged in a remodeling program, total gifts for the year were \$1,578.)

The remodeling program mentioned above took place for the most part in 1920, and it was doubtless triggered by an offer from Mrs. Numa Wright of Winston-Salem to present the church with new pulpit furniture on the condition, probably, that the congregation make certain improvements to the building. If this was the condition on which the offer was made by Mrs. Wright, it was accepted. After the beautiful new pulpit furniture arrived, the session instructed its clerk, Mr. T. C. Neal, on January 13, 1921, to write a letter to Mrs. Wright on behalf of the congregation to thank her for the handsome furniture given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Orr, who were Mrs. Wright's parents. (This same furniture is still in use today, having been saved from the fire of 1943).

Exactly what improvements were made to the church building at this time by the congregation is a bit uncertain, but it appears that they involved enlarging the pulpit area to make room for the new pulpit furniture, and making certain changes to the front of the building, and the adding of a front porch. Prior to the remodeling, there were two front doors, separated by a distance of several feet, opening directly into the sanctuary. In the remodeling that followed, these doors were replaced with windows; and one central door was installed between the windows. A front porch, supported by four large columns, was also added.

At the time of the remodeling, there were three sections of pews in the sanctuary. Almost without exception, the men always sat in the left section and the women in the right section for the worship services. In entering the church, the men usually came through the left front door and the women through the right one, so that these doors were commonly called the "men's" door and the "women's" door. The center section of pews were either occupied by the children or left vacant. At the rear of this center section, however, were several pews always reserved for "colored" visitors. The custom of the men and women sitting apart for worship services died slowly, and it was not until the congregation began to use the new building in 1944 that it was completely overcome.

The building was heated at this time by two large "pot-bellied" stoves which stood on either side of the church. In the interest of safety, these stoves were placed in boxes of sand. But the sand served another purpose also — it was used by the tobacco chewing men as a place to spit! The men also had a portable spittoon which they passed up and down the aisle to any number of their group in need of relief. Some men, however, prided themselves on being able to hold "a chaw" through an entire service without having to spit. A safe bet would be that they did not join in the congregational singing! This custom of chewing and spitting in a worship service seems crude to modern members, of course, but it may be that it kept some men who could not do without their "chaw" from missing the worship services or leaving the church during the sermons which usually lasted close to an hour.

It was during Mr. Oldham's pastorate at Bethesda that the First World War was fought, and the congregation doubtless suffered great anxiety for the welfare of the young men from Bethesda who went into service. One of Bethesda's members, Algernon Sidney Neal, was killed in battle in France on November 2, 1918. He was the only white man from Caswell County to give his life on foreign soil in World War I; and it is therefore appropriate that Post 89 of the American Legion in Caswell County should be named in his honor. Other members of Bethesda serving in the war were Yancey Blackwell; Van Daniel, Sr.; Charles Law, Sr.; Sidney Law; and Reid Blackwell. It is interesting to note that Mr. Yancey Blackwell was elected an elder by the congregation on August 22, 1915, but was not ordained until the

fourth Sunday in October, 1919, because he had to leave for service before his ordination could be arranged.

Mr. Oldham received able assistance in his work at Bethesda — as well as the other churches on the field — from his wife, Mrs. Eula Kirkpatrick Oldham. One of her greatest contributions was organizing the Women of the Church, and it is to the story of the Women of Bethesda that we now turn.

WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

The Women of Bethesda were first organized in 1915, under the leadership of Mrs. George Oldham. (Mrs. Oldham also helped to organize the Women of the Yanceyville and Griers Churches.) There were twenty charter members in the Bethesda group, and their names follow: Mrs. Lelia Blackwell; Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr.; Miss Cora Harralson; Mrs. Henry Harrelson; Mrs. T. B. Law; Mrs. T. S. Neal, Sr.; Mrs. George Oldham; Miss Ida Neighbors; Miss Nannie Neighbors; Miss Nonnie Neighbors; Mrs. Etta Ware; Mrs. Currie Watlington; Miss Alice Womack; Mrs. Bettie Womack; Miss Edna Womack; Miss Hester Womack; Miss Bessie Wright; Mrs. I. K. Wright; Mrs. Sallie Wright; and Mrs. Mary Roberson.

This organization was first called the Women's Missionary Society, and the programs dealt largely with mission emphases. The first president was Mrs. Oldham and the second was Mrs. T. B. Law, mother of Charles and Francis. In 1920, the organization changed its name to the Women's Auxiliary; and in 1948, the name Women of the Church was adopted. The Auxiliary was divided into circles in 1924. At the outset there were two circles. In 1948, a third circle was organized, and in 1956 a fourth was added.

Presidents serving after Mrs. Oldham and Mrs. Law have included: Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr.; Miss Cora Harralson; Mrs. T. S. Neal; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr.; Mrs. R. B. Chance; Mrs. Unsell Paschal; Mrs. Francis Law; Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr.; Mrs. David Neal; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Jr.; Mrs. Richard Page; Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr.; Mrs. Charles Law, Sr.; and Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Jr.

In recent years the president's term of office has been limited to two years; but in earlier years, when terms were unrestricted, a number of the women served with distinction for many years. Those serving longest as president were Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr., Miss Cora Harralson, and Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr.

At least three women from Bethesda have served on the Executive Committee of Orange Presbyterial. These are Miss Cora Harralson, Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr., and Mrs. David Neal. In 1957, an Honorary Life Membership was presented to Miss Cora Harralson by District 1 of the Women of Orange Presbytery in appreciation of her twelve years of service on the Presbyterial level.

In 1926, and again in 1928, the Bethesda Women were awarded the Loving Cup by Orange Presbyterial for the best presentation of the standard of excellence by poster, with Miss Cora Harralson doing the art work on the posters.

In 1947, Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr. was presented the first Honorary Life Membership ever given by the local group. Other recipients of this honor have been, Mrs. Nannie Wright (1957); Mrs. Dora Lillard (1961); Miss Hester Womack (1962); Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr. (1963); Miss Bessie Wright (1964); and Mrs. R. L. Neal, Sr. (1965).

The first secretary of the Women of Bethesda was Miss Hester Womack who filled the office faithfully for thirty years. Mention should be made also of her services for twenty years as Historian for the Women. Other Secretaries of the women's organization have been Mrs. Elwood Clayton; Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.; Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr.; Mrs. John Jones; and Mrs. Kenneth Johnson.

Mrs. I. K. Wright, affectionately known as "Mrs. Nannie", was a most colorful and energetic member of the Women's organization for many years. As

the long-time Treasurer of the Women she saw not only that the money was properly handled, but that it was also raised. It was her theory that the women ought constantly to be engaged in some money-raising project, and she was diligent in pushing her theory, both in words and with work.

A sad note was struck in the area of Women's work on April 19, 1949, when a car bearing Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Neal, Sr.; Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Sr.; Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.; and Miss Cora Harralson wrecked at Pittsboro en route to a meeting of Orange Presbyterial at Sanford. No one in the car was killed, but several were seriously injured and required prolonged hospitalization.

The Women of Bethesda have been faithful through the years in supporting the work of the Presbyterian Church on all levels. On the local level, they have manifested a continuing concern for the appearance and comfort of "God's House", and they have given generously of their time, effort, and money in expressing this concern. Before the old church burned in 1943, they led the way in several efforts to beautify that building and make it more comfortable — going so far, on several occasions, as to borrow the money to have the work done and assuming the responsibility for repaying it. The Women were also responsible for adding such items in the old building as carpets, shades, lighting fixtures, and new coats of paint. In 1925 and 1926, they gave a generous assist to the successful effort of the congregation to build five Sunday School rooms. When the congregation was faced with the necessity of erecting a new plant after the fire in 1943, the women went to work and raised large sums of money to help meet the cost of the new building. Their contributions as a group in 1943 and 1944, totaled \$2,600, to say nothing of the sums raised by individual women and not counted in the above figure. In 1951, the women added lighting fixtures and a carpet to the sanctuary. In the ensuing years, they have equipped the kitchen with modern conveniences; placed a carpet on the floor of the vestibule, hallway, and steps of the educational building; planted shrubbery around the church; and assisted in a great many other ways with the general upkeep of the church property. Their current project involves equipping the new manse with curtains and other necessities. A project that has added much to the worship services of the congregation has been the practice of putting flowers in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings.

It would be impractical to try to discuss within the scope of this history all the projects which the Bethesda Women have undertaken in behalf of the local church, but enough has been said already to indicate how they have been a source of great help to the church down through the years. The probability is that Bethesda would not have withstood the strain of its hardest years had it not been for the activity and support of the women. In the years from about 1915 to 1943, or so it would seem, the women assumed the major responsibility for the support of the church, and it would not be far amiss to say that the history of Bethesda and the history of the women for these years are practically synonymous.

The women were organized originally for the primary purpose of supporting Foreign Missions. In the years that have followed they have not deserted a concern for missions, but they have become concerned about many other benevolent causes as well. Through their regular budget and their special offerings, they have given support in recent years to all benevolent causes of the Presbyterian Church. In earlier years, they adopted a child each year at the Barium Springs Home for Children and assumed responsibility for clothing him or her. After World War II, they helped for several years with the upkeep of an English War Orphan. During the war they were most faithful in remembering the boys in service from the church and community with letters, cards, and food from home. Another good work of the women through the years has been that of sending cards, flowers, and food to those in the community who are sick or in sorrow. For a number of years they have

sponsored a delegate, each summer, to the Negro Women's Conference in Winston-Salem. One delegate sponsored by the group, Mrs. Jim Walker, received her diploma in 1964, after attending four consecutive conferences.

From about 1920 to 1956, the women joined other groups within the church and the congregation as a whole in helping to provide special care for Miss Eugenia Barts, a member of the congregation who became an invalid early in life and had to spend most of her life in a rest home.

All things considered, the Women of Bethesda Church have established a commendable record of service. They have imitated very closely the example of Christ who came into the world not to be served, but to serve.

ERWIN BEVERIDGE THOMPSON

Following the resignation of Mr. Oldham in March of 1921, a pulpit committee consisting of Miss Bessie Wright, Miss Hester Womack, Dr. J. F. Badgett, and R. L. Neal, Sr. was appointed to look for a new minister. The man recommended to the congregation for consideration was the Rev. E. B. Thompson. The congregation voted to call him one year as Stated Supply at a salary of \$400 per annum, and to call him later as pastor on the condition that the other churches in the group (Yanceyville, Griers, and Pleasant Grove), did the same. Accepting the call, Mr. Thompson began his work in Caswell County in July of 1921. At the October 19, 1921, meeting of Orange Presbytery, calls as pastor were placed in his hands from the Bethesda, Griers, and Pleasant Grove Churches. (He continued in the relation of Stated Supply at the Yanceyville Church.) The Commission appointed by Presbytery to install him at the three churches extending calls consisted of Reverends S. M. Rankin, J. H. Smith, N. R. Claytor, and Ruling Elders Tom Neal, and George Williamson. Mr. Thompson resigned from his Caswell County pastorate on March 1, 1923; and, in April of that year, he was dismissed by Orange Presbytery to the Red River Presbytery in Louisiana. During his short pastorate at Bethesda, a total of six members were added to the church. Among these were Tom Neal, Jr.; George Neal; Pearl Strader; Nellie Foster; and Ed Ware.

Remembered in part for his red hair, Mr. Thompson was a native of Smithville, Ga. He was born there on June 26, 1890. After completing his studies at Davidson College, he attended Southwestern Presbyterian University at Clarksville, Tenn. He received his diploma from Union Seminary, Richmond, in 1918. On September 7, 1921, he was married to Miss Elizabeth Kelly at Brewton, Ga.; and to this union were born two daughters. Mr. Thompson served in five different Synods during his ministerial career. Before coming to Caswell, all of his work had been in Ga. After leaving Yanceyville, he served in Winnsboro, La.; Magnolia, Miss.; Dawson, Ga.; and Wyndale, Va. He returned to Ga. for rest in 1930; and, in 1939, he was honorably retired because of poor health. He died on February 28, 1946.

ORGANIZATION OF THE YOUTH

It was on a Spring day in 1922, under a big oak tree in the Bethesda Church yard, that the youth of the church were first organized to carry on a program of study, worship, and service beyond what was done in the Sunday School class on Sunday mornings. Originally called the Young People's League, this group was organized under the sponsorship of the Women's Auxiliary, with Mrs. Mary Roberson as Adult Advisor. Edna Harrelson (Now Mrs. R. B. Chance) was the first young person in the group to attend a Youth Conference, and this was in the summer of 1922, at Davidson College.

Adult Advisors serving since Mrs. Roberson have included Miss Cora Harrelson; Mrs. T. B. Law; Mrs. T. S. Neal; Mrs. R. B. Chance; Mrs. U. E. Paschal; Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.; Mrs. Charles Law, Sr.; Mrs. Harvey Chance, Jr.; Mrs.

John Jones; Miss Virginia Rice; Mrs. Elwood Clayton; Mrs. Francis Law; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Page; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Law, Jr.; and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Harrelson.

The vitality of the youth organization has varied through the years, but the over-all contribution of the group to the life of Bethesda has been most significant. And a number of Bethesda's young people have served on committees and councils beyond the level of the local church. The following six are known to have served on the presbytery's youth council: Garret Neal; David Neal; R. L. Neal, Jr.; Taylor Blackwell; Lelia Alice Blackwell; and Mary Scott Blackwell. Mary Scott was also a high-ranking member in the Westminster Fellowship during her years at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Some of the organization's most active years were from 1933 to 1951, when Miss Cora Harralson was the adult advisor. Under her leadership the young people engaged in many activities and projects on the presbytery as well as the local level. Her work with the youth has left an enduring impression for good in the life of the church.

WILLIAM WASHINGTON WARREN McMORRIES

The Rev. W. W. McMorries preached his first sermon at Bethesda on the fourth Sunday in October, 1923. An informal congregational meeting was held following the service for the purpose of discussing the advisability of calling Mr. McMorries as pastor. He was then sixty-four years of age, and there were some who questioned the wisdom of calling one of his age to serve a field in which there were four widely scattered churches. A formal meeting of the congregation was held on the fourth Sunday in November to vote on whether or not to extend a call. The vote to call Mr. McMorries was unanimous; and, looking back on the decision from the perspective of today, the decision was a fortunate one because Mr. McMorries did an excellent job over the next nine years in building up the membership of the congregation and in leading the congregation to undertake a much-needed remodeling program. Calls from the four churches were not placed in Mr. McMorrie's hands officially until the meeting of Presbytery on May 6, 1924. A combined salary of \$1,250 was promised by the four churches (Bethesda promised \$400), and Presbytery promised to supplement the salary by a few hundred dollars. Mr. McMorries continued to serve these four churches until May, 1932.

Mr. McMorries was born in Beth Eden, S. C., on April 17, 1859. After his father was killed in the Civil War and his mother married again, he went to live with his uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. William M. Grier, at Due West, S. C. After graduating from Erskine College, he taught school for one year. In the summer that followed he suffered a severe attack of typhoid fever. During his sickness he felt a call to the ministry and answered affirmatively. He earned his B.D. degree from Erskine Seminary while again living with his uncle and aunt. After ordination by the second A.R.P. Presbytery in December, 1884, he served his home churches, King's Creek and Canon's Creek, in Newberry County, S. C., for twenty-one years. Transferring from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to the Presbyterian Church, U. S. in 1905, he served churches in Hazlehurst, Ga.; Barnesville, Ga.; Ellamore, W. Va.; and Parsons, W. Va.; before coming to Caswell County. After serving in Caswell County for almost nine years he decided to retire from the active pastorate and went to live with his sister in Atlanta, Ga. He died on February 1, 1938.

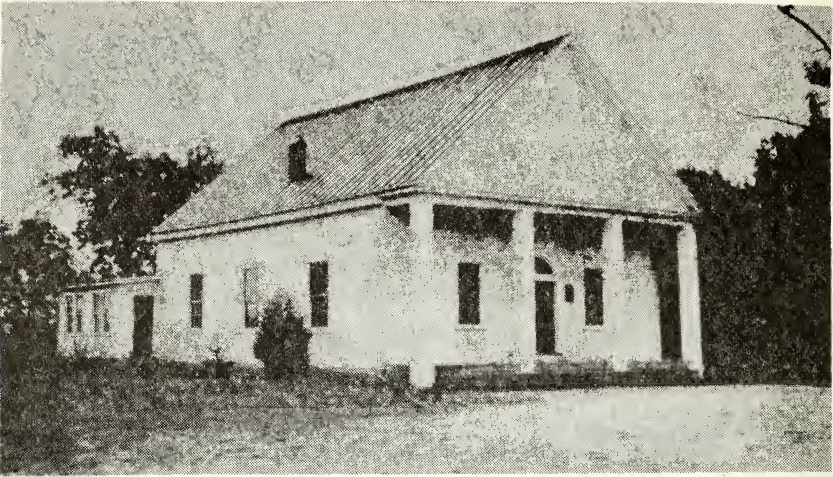
Mr. McMorries was gifted with an easy flow of language; and it is generally agreed by the members of long standing that he was one of the best preachers, if not the best, ever to serve the Bethesda Church. According to memorials written by the Rev. Roy Whitley, "His sermons were deep, yet impressive and interspersed with

appropriate illustrations. His prayers were beautiful. He was a man of strong convictions and fearless before his fellowman". Mr. T. J. Henderson of Yanceyville, spoke of him as "a wonderful travelling companion, and a scholar. He had a kindly heart and did much good I could write a book about him."

Being the first pastor of the four churches to own a car (it had solid rubber tires), Mr. McMorries often loaned it to others. One friend who borrowed the car "tried to mix alcohol and gasoline" and wrecked the car beyond repair. Thereafter, Mr. McMorris depended upon Mr. Henderson for transportation — but not without paying for it. "He always put in five gallons of gas and bought me a half dozen bananas", said Mr. Henderson. Others also remember Mr. McMorries for his Scottish ways, and most who knew his manner of life thought he had to "pinch pennies" to make ends meet. But when so many banks were forced to close during the depression, it was learned that he had sizeable accounts in several different banks.

From the standpoint of growth in membership, Mr. McMorries' pastorate at Bethesda was most fruitful. A total of fifty-seven members were added to the active roll during his pastorate, with a few of these being restored from the inactive roll. The net growth was forty-two, with the membership increasing from forty-seven to eighty-nine. The following are some of the ones received by Mr. McMorries: Mrs. Wilson B. Thacker; Douglas Neal; Lonnie Birch Powell; Garrett Neal; Algernon S. Neal; Hurley Stanley; Robert W. Blackwell; Mrs. Ada Blackwell; Lula Stanley; Mrs. Bertha Stanley; Mrs. Louis Hodges (nee Ruby Neighbors); Mary A. Jones; Russell Neighbors; J. Oscar Neighbors; Vernie N. Walker; Mrs. R. B. Chance (nee Edna Harrelson); Mary L. Neighbors; Mary Fitzgerald; Ralph Ware; Joseph Harrelson; Lonnie Powell; Mrs. Mary Gatewood; Elizabeth Gatewood; Jesse Thompson; Jack Thompson; Preston Harralson; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr.; Elizabeth Neal; Rodney Jones; W. C. Allison; Elsie Thacker; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ware; Robert Neal, Jr.; Lelia Neal; Eva Pettigrew; Mrs. John Jones (nee Frances Stanley); Mrs. Charles Law, Sr.; Helen Jones; Mary and Eva Ware; Lassiter and Richard Powell; Eloise Hendrix; William, Ethel and Margaret Hannah; Mr. and Mrs. Kelly Custer; Van Daniel, Jr.; Jessie Barker; Walter Thacker; and Mrs. Lessie Harrelson.

OLD BETHESDA CHURCH



As noted earlier, Mr. McMorries led the congregation to undertake and complete a much-needed building and remodeling program which took place in two phases. The first phase involved the construction of five Sunday School rooms, the church's first, in 1925 to 1926. Judging from the sessional minutes, these rooms were built at a cost of \$1,550, with \$500 of this amount being contributed by the Presbytery's Committee of Home Missions. The exact date of the completion of the Sunday School rooms is not known, but the sessional minutes show that a meeting of the session was held in the Sunday School rooms on the fourth Sunday in November, 1926.

The second phase of the building and remodeling program during Mr. McMorries' pastorate occurred for the most part in 1929. It was triggered by an offer made to the Women's Auxiliary by Mrs. N. H. Wright to present the church with new pews on the condition that the congregation would place hardwood floors in the church and make certain other needed improvements to the building. The challenge was accepted by the women and the rest of the congregation, and work was begun very soon in making the necessary improvements. The broad, rough, poplar boards on the floor, with large cracks between most of them, were replaced with well-fitted hardwood flooring. The columns scattered about the sanctuary that were necessary to support the roof were removed, and the roof and walls were strengthened by placing steel rods from wall to wall at the ceiling level. The walls of the sanctuary, — poplar boards with poor finish, — were covered with sheet rock and papered, except at the bottom where an attractive hardwood finish was used. In the interest of more light, an additional window was added on each side between the two that already existed. The choir loft was set off by a rod and a velvet curtain given by the Womacks.

Then the new pews were added, given by Mrs. N. H. Wright, in memory of her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Orr. Since the lovely pews given by Mrs. Wright are the same ones still in use today, having been saved from the fire of 1943, no effort will be made to describe them. It is sufficient to say that these comfortable and attractive pews replaced ones that were most uncomfortable and unattractive, and that Mrs. Wright made a careful study of many different types of pews before deciding to have the present ones made by the Danville (Va.) Lumber Company.

The cost of this remodeling program, minus the pews, was \$1,170. The money for this work was borrowed by the women. By the end of the church year in March, 1930, \$710 of the borrowed amount had been repaid, with the women raising much of this by suppers, picnics, and by feeding civic groups. The annual gift to the church by Mrs. Dibrell, through Miss Hester Womack, was also applied to this loan. Since the depression was in full force after 1929, the women found it very hard to retire the remainder of the loan; and it was not until August, 1933, that the debt was paid in full. One can sense the joy which the women must have experienced at their August, 1933 meeting when it was announced that the loan had been repaid in full; but apparently they were not afraid of debts because they immediately voted to borrow another \$200 to cover the church and to help with a debt on the manse.

On January 5, 1930, the session acted favorably on the request from the women for permission to sell the old pewter communion goblets (no longer needed), with the proceeds to be applied to the building debt. But when the women learned that Mrs. N. H. Wright was interested in securing these goblets for their sentimental value, they decided to give them to her as a token of appreciation for all that she had done for the church.

The pewter goblets were no longer needed because a communion tray with individual glasses had been given to the church by the Womacks. Before this new set was put into use the communion wine had been served by passing the two goblets throughout the congregation, with everyone drinking from the same containers. There were some who objected to the new method of serving the communion wine from individual cups, saying "Style has gone too far when you carry it into the church". But the opposition was short-lived. The bread plates used in the communion service today are the same ones that have been in use as long as anyone can remember.

At the beginning of this chapter it was said that the years from 1894-1931 (the years covered in the chapter) saw the dawning of a brighter day in the Bethesda Church. But some may question the logic of this observation since the year 1931 leaves us in the midst of the years of the depression, when all churches had trouble paying their bills. In answer to the objection, let it be said that Bethesda did far better in paying its bills in 1931, than it did in 1893. And as far as membership is concerned, there is little comparison. Near the end of the preceding period, the membership sank as low as twenty-one; by the end of this period, there were eighty-nine members on the roll. The brighter day had not fully arrived by the end of the period covered in this chapter, but it had begun to dawn. Fortunately, the day was to grow increasingly brighter, though a time would come in the very near future when the smoke from the burning church would not only darken the sky, literally, but darken the hearts of the congregation, figuratively. Even this was to pass, and the future was to become increasingly brighter.

Before closing this chapter, let us here record the men who were ordained and installed as deacons and elders from 1894-1931.

DEACONS ORDAINED, 1894-1931

- I. K. Wright; known to have been a deacon in 1906, but no record of election or ordination; died May 15, 1907.
- J. W. Cobb; known to have been a deacon in 1906; but no record of election or ordination; died March 1, 1931.
- J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.; ordained October 25, 1908; ordained an elder, Oct., 1919.
- W. J. Pettigrew; elected Aug. 22, 1915; no date on ordination; became an elder in 1917.
- D. W. Wright, Sr.; elected Aug. 22, 1915; no date on ordination; ordained an elder March, 1925; died July 4, 1961.
- T. C. Pettigrew; ordained Dec. 23, 1917; died Feb. 17, 1929.
- R. L. Neal, Sr.; First mentioned as deacon in sessional minutes on Oct. 28, 1927; thought to have been elected on Aug. 28, 1917; no record of ordination; ordained an elder in March, 1925.
- Rufus Womack; ordained Nov. 27, 1921; died August 27, 1948.
- Ed. B. Blackwell; ordained fourth Sunday of March, 1925; died Jan. 25, 1948.
- Sidney Law; ordained fourth Sunday of March, 1925; transferred to Kinston, N.C.; died, January, 1965.
- Van Daniel, Sr.; ordained fourth Sunday of March, 1925.
- (Mr. Oscar Neighbors was elected a deacon in Feb. 1925, but declined the invitation to serve and was never ordained and installed.)

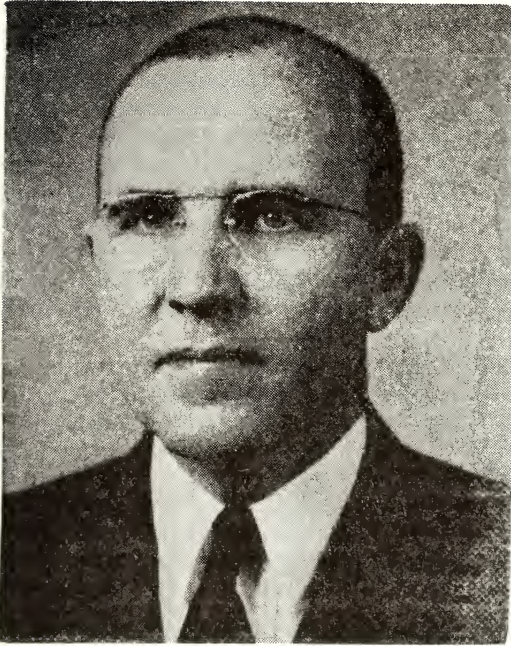
ELDERS ORDAINED, 1894-1931

- Edgar A. Allison; no record of election or ordination; present for first time at a session meeting on April 8, 1906; Clerk of Session, 1912-1918; left community in 1918.
- A. P. Orr; ordained Oct. 26, 1908; died 1908.
- T. S. Neal; elected Aug. 22, 1915; no record of ordination; Clerk of Session 1918-1934; died August 13, 1935. Active in community affairs as well as the church, he served one term as a Rep. to the House in the State Legislature from Caswell County. In 1904 he attended the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in San Antonio, Texas, as a representative from Orange Presbytery.
- W. J. Pettigrew; no record of election or ordination; attended his first session meeting on Dec. 23, 1917.
- J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.; elected Aug. 22, 1915; ordained fourth Sunday of Oct., 1919.
- T. C. Pettigrew; ordained Dec. 25, 1921; died Feb. 17, 1929.
- D. W. Wright Sr.; ordained fourth Sunday of March, 1925; died July 4, 1961. (A memorial to Mr. Wright will be found in a later chapter.)
- R. L. Neal, Sr.; ordained fourth Sunday of March, 1925.

CHAPTER VI

TESTED BY FIRE

1932-1944



REV. ROY FAUCETTE WHITLEY

The word fire is sometimes used in the Bible in a metaphorical sense to designate the trials and tribulations experienced by Christians in their journey through life. A good illustration of such usage is found in I Peter 1:7 & 8; here, Peter seeks to inspire loyalty to Christ in the midst of persecution by saying, “. . . the genuineness of your faith is tested by fire . . .”. It sometimes happens in the experience of Christian people, however, that a test of faith comes in the form of literal fire. Such was the case with the Bethesda Congregation when their place of worship burned on April 16, 1943, just a few years after they had completed a number of additions and improvements to the building. The test confronting the congregation after the fire was this: in attempting to rebuild shall we proceed with fear and conservatism — thinking just of present needs and re-

sources — and seek to build no finer or more adequate building than burned, or shall we proceed with vision and courageous faith — taking into account future as well as present needs — and seek to build a finer and more adequate building in the belief that where there is faith and a willingness to work God will provide the resources? The handsome and spacious building which stands today is evidence that the test of faith was met successmully, and we who benefit from the use of the building today are grateful that it was.

Our primary concern in this chapter will be with the story of the rebuilding of the church edifice following the fire; but, since the minister at the time of the fire, Rev. Roy F. Whitley, served the church for a number of years before the fire as well as a few following it, it is appropriate that we concern ourselves in this chapter with all the years spanned by his ministry at Bethesda (1932-1944).

BIOGRAPHY OF MR. WHITLEY

The Rev. Roy Faucette Whitley was born in Burlington, N. C., on January 18, 1903, the son of John Riley and Emelia Faucette Whitley. He was received under the care of Orange Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry on March 5, 1925. He graduated from Davidson College in 1929, and entered Union Seminary that same year. After receiving his B.D. Degree in 1932, he was licensed by Orange Presbytery on October 12, 1932, and ordained by the same Presbytery on October 23, 1932. His

ordination took place in the Bethesda Church, with the following men serving on his ordination commission: Reverends W. E. Harrop, J. S. Jones, W. R. Potter, and Ruling Elder T. S. Neal.

The first sermon preached by Mr. Whitley at Bethesda was on the fourth Sunday of May, 1932. (Mr. Whitley wore a new suit for this service and quite a few members wondered how he could afford it, when the depression was on and he had just finished school. The explanation was very simple; his sister had given it to him as a graduation present.) The congregation was greatly impressed with Mr. Whitley's ability and promise of usefulness; and they voted on June 19, 1932, to extend him a call as Stated Supply for the remainder of the year at \$25 per month. On April 2, 1933, the congregation called him as pastor and promised to pay a salary of \$300 per year. This was the amount the congregation had pledged, and the officers were hopeful that more could be paid as the year progressed. Other churches calling Mr. Whitley about this time, with terms of salary were Yanceyville, \$300; Pleasant Grove, \$125; and Griers, \$125. Presbytery's Home Missions Committee also contributed to his salary in the beginning, but the combined salaries totaled less than \$1,000. Members of the Commission appointed by Presbytery to install Mr. Whitley were Reverends W. H. Allison, A. D. Dickson, and Ruling Elder M. C. Foust.

Since Mr. Whitley began his pastorate at Bethesda in the midst of the depression, the church was not able to pay the salary which they knew he needed and deserved. But increases in salary were granted quite consistently over the years, so that by the end of Mr. Whitley's pastorate the church had more than doubled his original salary of \$300 per year. The increases are reflected in the salary which he received as follows: 1933, \$300; 1934, \$400; 1935, \$400; 1936, \$400; no figures for 1937 and 1938; 1939, \$550; 1940, \$550; 1941, \$550, plus Ministers' Annuity Fund payments; 1942, \$600 plus Annuity; 1943, \$754 plus Annuity; 1944, \$754 plus Annuity; 1945, \$915 plus Annuity.

Mr. Whitley was married on September 25, 1936, to Miss Barbara Schwarz of Danville, Va. Prior to her marriage, Mrs. Whitley served as the Director of Christian Education at the First Presbyterian Church in Danville. Mr. and Mrs. Whitley have one child, Barbara Ann, who was born on January 5, 1950.

While serving in Caswell County, Mr. Whitley completed the requirements for the Master of Theology Degree at Union Seminary, Richmond; and this degree was awarded in 1942. In 1948, after going to Monroe, N. C., he was granted the Doctor of Theology Degree by the same institution. Mr. Whitley declined a number of calls to larger churches before going to the First Presbyterian Church of Monroe, N. C., in June, 1945; and one of the factors responsible for his decision to decline these calls was the burning of the Bethesda Church.

When Mr. Whitley resigned as pastor of the Bethesda, Yanceyville, Pleasant Grove, and Griers Churches to go to Monroe, his accomplishments in the four churches and in the county were summarized in an article in the Caswell Messenger. Let us now quote from that article.

"Coming here directly from the seminary in 1932, Mr. Whitley has held only one pastorate. During his stay here he has seen many improvements. The group of four churches has grown from dependence upon denominational aid to self-sustaining and independent churches carrying mission work of their own in the county. (The churches first became self-supporting in April, 1943.) The salary of the minister has been increased from less than \$1,000 in 1932 to \$3,000 in 1945. A new seven room manse has been constructed, a handsome educational building built at Yanceyville, a new \$42,000 church erected at Bethesda, and extensive remodeling and equipping of each church has been accomplished. None of the churches has any indebtedness and some have building funds for post-war improvements. A total of 453 members have

been received at the four churches during this time, and one hundred have transferred to other churches or been lost by death, which brings the net membership from 269 at the beginning of this pastorate to 550 at present.

"Mr. Whitley has served one term as the Moderator of Orange Presbytery, rendered valuable aid on a number of Presbytery committees, and served as director of young people's conferences for three years.

"He has been active in the work and welfare of the county. At present he is Chairman of the Caswell County Chapter of the American Red Cross, Chaplain of the Masonic Lodge, member of the Yanceyville Rotary Club, and Chairman of the Yanceyville Playgrounds. In addition, he was the first Scoutmaster in Yanceyville."

Mr. Whitley's only pastorate since leaving Caswell County in May, 1945, has been at the First Presbyterian Church of Monroe, N. C. This church has made good progress under his leadership, with an increase in membership from 416 in 1945, to 630 in 1964. In this same period, the church's total budget has climbed from \$12,000 to \$48,339.

Following a heart attack in 1963, Mr. Whitley was forced to take an extended rest; but he has recovered sufficiently since that time to permit the resumption of his duties.

PROGRESS AT BETHESDA

Like the other churches in the grouping, Bethesda fared well under the leadership of Mr. Whitley. Concerning the growth of the membership, a total of eighty-nine members were received — the majority of them on profession of faith. As a result, the membership increased from 89 in 1933 to 133 in 1944. Members received by Mr. Whitley were as follows: Earler Custer; Lula May Barker; Margaret Watlington; Geneva Custer; Melba Stanley; Ellen Neighbors; Elizabeth Foster; Mrs. Nan Edwards; Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Barker; Hettie Barker; Novis and Vernie Dickerson; J. W. Paschall; David Neal; Louise Ware; Preston Hill; Carrie Payne; Mrs. L. W. Barker; Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Payne; Sis Hall; Lillian Thacker; Ruth Thacker; Lucy Fulcher; Mary Fulcher; Rebecca Thacker; Mary Hudson; Prentiss Foster; Dr. J. H. Thacker; George Neal; Mrs. S. A. Fulcher, Robert Fulcher; Katherine Neighbors; Mrs. Harvey Chaney, Jr. (nee Julia Wright); Sam Hudson; Ben Jones Neal; Robert E. Chance; Elizabeth Law; Marjorie Law; Marion Neighbors; James Y. Blackwell, Jr.; Taylor Blackwell; Craig Stanley; Mrs. Jack Thompson; Mrs. Alvis Chandler (nee Edith Neighbors); Mrs. Louis Hodges (nee Ruby Neighbors); Mrs. Richard Smith (nee Lelia Alice Blackwell); John Jones; Buby Bailey; David Wright, Jr.; Hugh C. Wright; S. A. Fulcher; Billy Fulcher; Dillard Fulcher; Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Hooper; Mrs. Katherine Watson Neal; George I. Harrelson; Robert Newman Hodges; Virginia Katherine Hudson; Nannie Bett Hudson; Billy Smith, Alma Jones; Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Ware; Mrs. George Neal; Jane Neighbors; Gladys Neighbors; Mr. and Mrs. E. W. James; Mr. and Mrs. Unsell Paschall; Mrs. J. Reid Blackwell; Mrs. Mary Chance Brame; Mrs. Roy O. Fagan (nee Carolyn Watlington); Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Chatham; Mr. and Mrs. T. K. Austin; Mrs. Francis Law; James P. Wilkins; Douglas Harrelson; Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Clayton; Charles J. Law, Jr.; Aubrey Ware; William I. Reagan; Virginia Law; Owen Satterfield; Mary Lee Satterfield; Mrs. Ursell Satterfield; and Mrs. J. B. Harrelson.

One of the most fruitful years in membership growth was 1939, when Dr. E. E. Gillespie, Supt. of Home Missions for the Synod of N. C., conducted a revival at Bethesda. In this revival there were seventeen decisions either to accept Christ for the first time or to make a change in church membership. Thirteen of the group united with Bethesda, eleven by profession of faith and two by reaffirmation.

A number of improvements and additions were made to the church property under Mr. Whitley. In 1933, as mentioned earlier, the Bethesda and Yanceyville

Churches joined in building a new seven-room manse in Yanceyville. The greatest improvement to the church property during his pastorate was, of course, the erection of the new church edifice in 1943-44; but there were a number of improvements made to the old building before it burned. Let us look at these before discussing the new building. In 1938, the church was refinished inside and repainted outside. Inside improvements included repapering the sanctuary walls and the addition of new electric lighting fixtures. In this same year, Mrs. N. H. Wright gave to the church a handsome bronze marker in memory of her aunts and uncle. This marker was attached to the front of the church, with the following inscription:

**“Bethesda Presbyterian
Church
Organized 1765**

In memory of

Eliza Ann Orr

Andrew P. Orr

Rosa Orr”

When the old church burned this marker was saved, and it is now affixed to the front of the present church. At homecoming services in 1939, six beautiful memorial windows were dedicated in memory of a number of deceased members and in honor of some who were still living at the time.

In 1939, following a threat of fire, a central heating system was installed, with six radiators in the sanctuary and one in each of the five Sunday school rooms. The cost of installation of \$900, not including the work done by the men of the church in digging the basement for the boiler. In 1941, a new carpet was placed on the sanctuary floor with the aid of a \$200 gift from Mrs. R. L. Dibrell of Danville.

Returning for a moment to the subject of the heating system, the installation cost of \$900 was met largely with a \$500 donation from the Women's Auxiliary and a \$200 gift from Mrs. Dibrell. The Women secured their donation by borrowing it from the Bank of Reidsville. Rapid progress was made in repaying this note, so that in October of 1941, Mrs. I. K. Wright, the treasurer, could not only report to the Auxiliary that the note had been paid off, but that the group now had a balance in the bank of \$50. It was probably the first time in the history of the women that they had been out of debt! But the situation did not last long. With the rebuilding effort after the fire, when the church acquired what was probably the largest indebtedness in its history, the women felt obligated, as would be expected, to help with paying off the debt. (More about this part of their work later.)

NEW ORGAN DEDICATED

On December 8, 1937, a beautiful new Wicks Organ with Deagan Chimes was given to the church by Mrs. R. L. Dibrell of Danville, Va. At the dedictaory services on Homecoming Sunday, June 26, 1938, the organ was presented to the congregation on behalf of Mrs. Dibrell by Miss Hester Womack and it was received on behalf of the congregation by Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr., Clerk of the Session. This organ was saved from the fire in 1943, but it was so badly damaged in the hasty removal that it had to be returned to the Wicks Factory for repairs. While it was at the factory, the Bethesda Congregation voted to have it enlarged as well as rebuilt. The rebuilt organ was placed in the new church in the fall of 1948, and was dedicated on

October 24, 1948. This organ is still in use today, and a plaque on the present organ has this inscription:

**“In Loving Memory of
Mary Watlington Richardson
Robert Payne Richardson
Presented by
Mrs. Mary Boyd Dibrell
December 8, 1937.”**

This same plaque was also fixed to the first organ. It was highly appropriate that Mrs. Dibrell should give the organ in memory of the Richardsons. They were her grandparents, and they had at one time been members of the Bethesda Church — as will be recalled from an earlier chapter.

The first organ was installed at a cost of \$1,400, with Mrs. Dibrell paying the entire bill; and the rebuilt organ was returned at a cost of \$2,000, with Mrs. Dibrell contributing \$900 towards this amount.

In view of the fact that Mrs. Dibrell contributed about \$5,500 to the Bethesda Church from 1935-1954 (including contributions on the organ), it might be of interest to say a further word about her friendship with Bethesda. (Mrs. Dibrell's husband was an associate of Dibrell Tobacco Co., Danville.) Her friendship with Bethesda began in 1935, when Miss Hester Womack wrote her a letter, at the suggestion of Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr., asking for a contribution to the church's building fund. In response, Mrs. Dibrell sent a check for \$200 which proved to be the first of many donations. Her friendship with Miss Womack grew, as did her concern for the work at Bethesda, with the result that she made yearly contributions to the church each Christmas through Miss Womack. From 1935-43, she gave \$200 per year; and from 1944-54, she gave \$100 per year. In addition to these annual gifts and the contributions on the organ, she gave \$500 on the building fund in 1944, and \$300 in 1945, to help furnish the Sunday school room where Miss Hester Womack taught. Mrs. Dibrell died on April 11, 1955; and, appropriately enough, flowers were sent to her funeral from the entire Bethesda Congregation.

ADDITIONAL MUSICAL NOTES

For many years Bethesda has been blessed with faithful organists. The person with the longest tenure in this field is Mrs. Hurley Stanley. She played a pump organ for twelve years, followed by eighteen years of service on the organ given by Mrs. Dibrell. When Mrs. Stanley resigned her position in 1955, the congregation presented her with a diamond and pearl ring in appreciation of her services. Miss Mary Lily Watlington succeeded Mrs. Stanley and served as organist from 1956-1964. At the time she began playing she was a member of the Bethel Methodist Church; but, happily for Bethesda, she transferred her membership to Bethesda in 1959. The present organist, Mrs. David Neal, began her services Oct. 1, 1964. An occasional substitute is Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr.

The church has three pianos in use today, all gifts of members of the church. The first was given by Miss Rebecca Neal in 1941; the second by Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr., in 1945; and the third by Mrs. Francis Law in 1964.

There have been few years, if any, within the memory of Bethesda's oldest members when the church has been without a choir. It would be impossible to list the names of all the persons who have sung in the choir throughout the church's history, to say nothing of the length of their services. It is sufficient to say that the number is great and that appreciation is due all who have served in this capacity. Since 1963 the church has engaged Mr. Eugene Stryker of Danville, Va., to direct the choir in its practice sessions.

THE CHURCH BURNS

On Friday morning, April 16, 1953, a number of Bethesda's men gathered at the church to clean off the grounds in preparation for the baccalaureate sermon of the graduating class of the Cobb Memorial High School. Fire was set to some broom sage on the south side of the church. After it was thought to have burned itself out, the men turned their attention to other parts of the grounds. But the broom sage was still smouldering; and while the attention of the men was focused elsewhere, the wind blew a spark against the weatherboarding of the church sanctuary. Finding lodging in the highly combustible age-old walls, the spark quickly burst into flames; and the flames spread out of control before the men were even aware that the church was afire. (There was a knot hole near the ground level of the building where a squirrel had been known to nest, and it was thought by some that this is where the fire had its origin.) With no fire fighting equipment available and no hope of extinguishing the fire, the men gave their efforts to removing the furnishings from the burning building. As the smoke rose into the air, people living near the church rushed to the scene to help in removing the furnishings. And almost miraculously, every piece of furniture in the church was removed, including the piano, organ, pews, and even the carpet. Some of these items were restored and placed in the new church continue in use today, but some items were damaged beyond repair. Total losses in the fire were estimated at \$10,000, with only \$4,500 covered by insurance.

It was indeed a "black day" in the life of the congregation. The people had worked hard and sacrificed much in order to provide a building adequate for their needs, and many happy memories had gathered about this building where they had worshipped for so long. Now, within a matter of minutes, the building had gone up in flames. At this point the congregation no doubt felt very much like the children of Israel after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem: "Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste." Isaiah 64:11.

THE CONGREGATION TAKES STEPS TO REBUILD

The congregation was now faced with the test of faith mentioned earlier — whether to build with vision and courageous faith or with conservatism and fear. The victory went to vision and faith, as evidenced by the building that stands today; but the victory was not easily won. It required fervent prayer, hard work, and sacrificial giving on the part of the entire congregation. Let us now seek to trace briefly the steps that led to the erection of the present edifice.

The first meeting of the congregation following the fire was on Sunday afternoon, June 18, at the Cobb Memorial School. (The Bethesda Congregation had received invitations from Locust Hill and Bethel Methodist Churches and New Ephesus Baptist Church to use their facilities until a new church building could be erected, but it was felt that the Cobb School offered the best facilities during the interim. It was here that the congregation met until moving into the new church.) The worship service on this particular Sunday included the observance of The Lord's Supper, and at the end of this observance every member present consecrated himself and herself anew to God and the task of rebuilding the church.

A Congregational meeting followed the worship service, and members of the congregation were encouraged to express themselves relative to the kind of building to be erected and the best method for proceeding. The congregation was of one mind in its desire and determination to rebuild; but, as would be expected, there were differences of opinion as to the kind of building to be erected. Finally, the congregation voted to place the entire matter in the hands of a large advisory committee

composed of the Session; the Deacons; the Officers of the Women's Auxiliary; and of two members-at-large, Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr. and Mr. J. B. Watlington.

Following the congregational meeting, the Session met and approved the appointment of a Building Committee consisting of the following: Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr., Chairman; R. L. Neal, Sr.; and Dr. J. H. Thacker. The architect chosen to design the building was Mr. N. H. Haines of Duke University, Durham. Instructions were given the Building Committee to proceed at once in arranging a meeting with the architect and in making application to the War Production Board, Washington, D. C., for a building permit. (During World War II it was necessary for anyone wishing to build to have a permit.)

On Monday night, April 19, a large percentage of the congregation met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr., to discuss ways and means by which to raise the necessary funds for the new building. The officers of the church and the members of the Women's Auxiliary were appointed as a "committee-of-one" to do everything possible toward collecting the necessary funds. The Rev. Roy Whitley agreed to serve as Chairman of the Finance Committee; and Mr. Charles Law, Sr. was named as Treasurer of the Building Fund.

On May 23, 1943, a report on the steps to be taken in rebuilding the church was presented to the congregation and adopted. It was estimated that the proposed building would cost about \$17,000; and the congregation accepted the challenge of raising \$10,600 to go with \$6,600 already in sight. (The money already in sight included \$4,500 from insurance; \$1,100 from the Belk Foundation for bricks; and a challenge gift of \$1,000 from Synod's Committee on Home Missions.) The congregation expressed itself as favoring a "pay-as-you-go" plan for building, but authority was given the Building Committee to proceed at their discretion.

The members of the Building Committee and the officers of the Women's Auxiliary met with the architect many times in trying to plan a building which would meet the needs of the congregation well into the future. The original plans were changed a number of times, and the cost of the building rose finally to \$38,000. (This figure included the cost of the stained glass windows and other memorials, but not furnishings. With the furnishings, the building was valued in excess of \$42,000 at the time of dedication. Today, it is valued at about \$100,000.) The Reidsville Flour Co. was engaged to erect the building on a cost-plus basis. Actual construction began in August, 1943, and proceeded rapidly under the supervision of Mr. Robert Wray of Reidsville.

The congregation watched with anticipation and admiration as the new building rose into the air; and it was indeed a "red-letter" day when the congregation used the building for the first time on March 26, 1944, although all services on this particular day were held in the educational building. Sunday School was the first activity held; and, with 70 persons present, Mr. R. L. Neal, Sr., opened the assembly with prayer. The first hymn was "Take My Life and Let It Be, Consecrated Lord to Thee". A worship service led by Mr. Whitley followed Sunday School; during this service, Van Womack Daniel, III, was baptized and, became the first person to receive this sacrament in the new building. Following the worship service, the session met and received Gustava Paschal as the first person to unite with the church in the new facilities.

The first wedding in the new building was that of Miss Elizabeth Neal to Mr. Kenneth Johnson on Monday night, March 27, 1944. The first funeral was that of Robert Orr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Orr, an April 11, 1944. Both these services were held in the educational building. The first funeral in the new sanctuary was that of Mrs. Ada Cobb Blackwell on Feb. 2, 1945.

THE SOLICITATION OF FUNDS

The cost of the new church edifice, minus furnishings, was approximately \$38,000, as indicated; and this was indeed a large sum for a congregation of 137 during a time of war when a number of these 137 was in the armed forces. And, yet, the building was dedicated free of debt on June 25, 1944! How was the congregation able to raise so large a sum in so short a time? Where did the money come from?

Based on records kept by Mr. Charles Law, Sr., and the recollection of Mr. Whitley, the following breakdown in the receipts is offered:

Belk-Foundation gift for brick	\$ 1,100
Insurance payment	4,500
Belk Memorial Fund	340
Synod's Comm. on Home Missions	1,000
Presbytery's Comm. on Home Missions	500
The Women's Auxiliary of Bethesda	2,6000
35 memorial gifts	10,000
Congregation-at-large gifts	10,000 (approximate)
Public-at-large gifts	7,460 (approximate)

A further word about some of these receipts is in order.

Concerning the \$2,600 given by the Women's Auxiliary of Bethesda, it is interesting to note some of the ways by which the women raised this money. The primary means was by the "sweat-of-the-brow" in preparing suppers for civic clubs from surrounding communities and in sponsoring oyster and Brunswick stew suppers in the local community for the general public. The most novel means employed by the group was that of stationing members of their group in several of the warehouses in Danville during the sales season and soliciting bundles of tobacco from farmers coming to market. These bundles were then combined into piles and sold on the warehouse floor. Another project was that of shipping used clothing to a friend in Alabama who sold them in a used clothing store and returned the proceeds to the women. (Since the time the church was dedicated the women have made numerous other contributions to the church furnishings. In 1951, for instance, they added the lighting fixtures and the carpet to the sanctuary.)

As for the thirty-five memorial gifts valued at \$10,000, these were solicited for the most part by Mr. Whitley and Miss Hester Womack.

Regarding the gifts of the congregation, many generous pledges were made and paid. In addition, each member was given a building-fund bank in the form of a miniature cathedral and asked to make regular deposits in it. The fourth Sunday in each month was designated as bank-opening day, and a sizeable sum was received from this source. Let it be emphasized that the members of the church in the armed forces were also faithful and generous in making their contributions.

As for the gifts of the public-at-large, these were made by friends in the community from other churches, (the very first donation made to the building fund was by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fitzgerald of Pelham in the amount of \$25.00.); a few churches across the Presbytery; and individual Presbyterians across the state. The majority of the approximately \$7,460 given by the public-at-large was contributed by compassionate Presbyterians across the state who had probably never heard of Bethesda until after the fire. A long list of potential donors was compiled by Mr. Whitley with aid from the members of the church, and the names on the list were then divided among a number of the church members who were asked to write these individuals and ask for contributions. No record was kept of the people who did the writing; but some of those who did yeoman service in this capacity were as follows: Miss Cora Harralson; Miss Hester Womack; Miss Bessie Wright; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr.; Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr.; and Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Sr. Together

they collected at least \$5,000. There were many others who also assisted in this project.

The congregation had entered into this building program with the belief that God would provide the resources, and their faith had been vindicated. The money to pay for the building did not come easily, but it did come. Everyone who shared in the raising of the necessary funds is certainly to be commended.

DEDICATION SERVICES

Dedication services for the new buliding, free of debt, were held on Homecoming Sunday, June 25, 1944, with an 11 o'clock worship service Sunday morning and a 2:30 dedicatory service on Sunday afternoon. Speaker for the morning service was Dr. Donald W. Richardson, Dean of the Graduate School, Union Seminary, Richmond, Va.; and soloist was Mrs. Allan E. Stanley of the Duke University Choir. Leading the afternoon devotional was Dr. Joseph Dungleinson, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Danville, Va., with Miss Ruby Gray Thacker, granddaughter of Dr. J. H. Thacker, as soloist. The church was presented to the congregation by Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr., chairman of the Building Committee, and was received and dedicated to the glory of God by the Rev. Roy Whitley.

The sanctuary was not yet complete in every detail — it still lacked the lighting fixtures, the organ, the carpet and, a number of other items — but it was usable. And the congregation was delighted to be in it. All building costs up to this point had been met without the borrowing of funds, and the congregation preferred waiting for the items mentioned as lacking rather than going into debt.

Writing about the rebuilding of the church, Mr. Whitley had this to say: "God has wonderfully used the great Christian people of Bethesda in the work of the Kingdom. It was one of my prides and joys to have been associated with them in this work."

CHURCH EDIFICE AND FURNISHINGS

The church edifice designed by Mr. N. H. Haines and built by the Bethesda Congregation is a brick structure of colonial design and consists of a sanctuary with a vestibule and front porch; an educational building with seven class rooms (including the large assembly room and a room intended originally as a parlor); a kitchen; a choir room; and two restrooms (the restrooms were added later: the first in 1952, the second in 1963). The large front porch, topped by a steeple, is supported by six large columns. (The steel railings around the front porch today, as well as the railings on all outside steps, were added in 1954.)

The sanctuary has eight stained-glass windows. Six of them bear the same memorials and were given by the same individuals as the windows that were lost in the church that burned. The wording on the present eight windows is as follows:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Frances Harrelson Paschal
1837-1926 | 5. Thomas S. Neal
1881-1935
Ida Williamson Neal
1882-1936 |
| 2. David L. Wright
1847-1910
Sallie Cobb Wright | 6. Logan L. Harrelson
1847-1923
Adele White Harrelson
1859-1930 |
| 3. Mary Reid Blackwell
1838-1920
Carolyn B. Watlington | 7. James Farrish Badgett, M.D.
1855-1933 |
| 4. Joseph Felix Womack
1858-1897
Bettie Blackwell Womack | 8. Lelia Eliza Blackwell
1867-1936 |

The last two windows mentioned above were not found in the old church.

There are four stained glass windows of medium size in the vestibule, and the wording on these windows follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Issac K. Wright
1866-1907
Nannie Cobb Wright | 3. James W. Paschal
1858-1943 |
| 2. N. Lafayette Blackwell
1823-1897
Martha Siddle Blackwell
1837-1880 | 4. Zacharia Neal
1787-1850
Stephen Neal
1812-1892
Thomas C. Neal
1847-1919 |

The small stained glass windows over the front doors in the vestibule bear these words: Jackson and Mary Beaty Jones; John and Anna Herron Jones, Founders and Charter Members; Walter J. Jones, Donor.

Much of the furniture in the sanctuary today, including the pews, the organ, and the pulpit furniture came from the old church, although the organ had to be rebuilt after the fire, as will be recalled. The carpet in the sanctuary and the lighting fixtures were added by the Women's Auxiliary in 1951.

The pulpit Bible was given by Mrs. Annie Toms in memory of her mother, Mrs. Nannie Orr Wright. The Presbyterian Hymnals were presented by Mrs. Mary Shelton Yarborough in memory of her husband, James. Other items in the sanctuary today were given in more recent years and will be described at the appropriate point in the history.

Turning to the educational building, a number of the class rooms were furnished with the aid of memorial gifts; and plaques taking note of this fact will be found on the class room doors. The Beginner's room was furnished by Miss Rebecca Neal in memory of her brother, Cpl. Algernon Sidney Neal, and her sister, Miss Lizzie Neal. The room for Pioneers was furnished by Miss Jane Shelton in memory of her father, James Shelton. Another room was furnished in memory of Alfred Scales, with the donor wishing to remain anonymous. The Junior room was dedicated to Mrs. Boyd Dibrell in appreciation for her many contributions to the church, which included \$300 to help furnish the Junior room.

Other rooms in the educational building bear appropriate plaques in recognition of the valuable contributions made by various individuals to the building program. The room originally designed for a church parlor, with a large fireplace, but used today as a class room, was dedicated to Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr. in recognition of the fine work which he did as chairman of the Building Committee. The plaque found on the door of the assembly room bears the words that are truly in order:

“THE WHITLEY CHAPEL
In appreciation of
The Splendid Work Done By
Rev. and Mrs. Roy F. Whitley
In Rebuilding This Church”

Furnishings in the educational building at the time of dedication included venetian blinds, a table and chair for each teacher, chairs for the pupils, and a religious picture by Hofman. (These Hofman pictures are authorized copies of the originals which hang in the Riverside Church, New York, N. Y.) In addition to the above furnishings, the Junior rooms furnishings included carpeting. A lectern or teacher's stand was placed in the assembly room in memory of Dr. J. H. Thacker by his children. A second lectern was given later by the Women's Auxiliary. The Premier Hymnals found in the assembly room today were given by the class of Young Adults.

The entire church plant is steam heated. Originally, the boiler was fired by coal; but following a breakdown in the system in January, 1965, the furnace was converted to oil at a cost of \$525.

The building has been kept in good repair through the years, and it stands today as beautiful as ever as a continuing tribute to a congregation that did not lack in vision and courage when it would have been so easy to have given way to fear and conservatism.

MEMBERS IN THE ARMED FORCES

It was during Mr. Whitley's pastorate at Bethesda that World War II was fought; and, as would be expected, a number of the church's members entered the armed forces. Among those serving were three women: Miss Nannie Bett Hudson, WACS, and Misses Katherine and Marion Neighbors, WAVES. Male members serving in the war included the following: Algernon Neal; R. L. Neal, Jr.; George Neal; Lindsay Neighbors; Sam Hudson; Robert Fulcher; Thomas Garret Neal; Rutherford Douglass Neal; James P. Wilkins; Bobby Smith; and Harvey Chatham. Several others who served in the war have joined Bethesda since that time and these include Kenneth Johnson and Richard Page.

As a tribute to the members in service, a service flag was placed in the church on the fourth Sunday in December, 1942, where it remained until after the war. The material for this flag was donated by Miss Rebecca Neal; and the flag itself was made by Miss Cora Harralson.

On August 15, 1944, a service of worship was held at the church to give thanks for victory and the end of the war. The Bethesda Congregation had special reason for offering thanks since none of her members had been killed in the war, although a number were awarded the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in battle.

Since the end of World War II, Bethesda has had a number of other members serve in the armed forces in the defense of freedom; some of them served in the Korean conflict. The list includes the following: J. Y. Blackwell, Jr.; Craig Stanley; Robert Edward Chance; David Wright, Jr.; Hugh Wright; Earl Hodges; Taylor Blackwell; J. D. Foster; and Bailey Chance.

THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Troop No. 38 of the Boy Scouts of America was organized in the Bethesda Church in the spring of 1944, under the sponsorship of the Bethesda Church. The Scoutmaster at the time of organization, Mr. Elwood Clayton, has continued in this position without interruption until today. He has been recognized on numerous occasions as one of the finest leaders in the District. Not only has this Troop been the means of training countless boys in the habits of good scouting, but it has also been the means of bringing some into the church. One of the highlights in the experience of Troop No. 38 occurred on December 19, 1948, when three of its members reached the pinnacle of Boy Scouting and were awarded their Eagle Badges. The three boys were J. D. Foster, Raymond Walker, and George William Hodges.

In the summer of 1948, the parents of some of the Scouts, and a few members of the church, plus Mr. Clayton and the Rev. Herman Womeldorf, joined forces in moving an old barracks building from Camp Butner, near Durham, to Bethesda for use as a Scout hut. This building was bought from the government by Orange Presbytery and given to Bethesda on the condition that Bethesda move a similar building from Camp Butner to the Presbytery's camp site at New Hope.

DEACONS ORDAINED FROM 1932-1944

George Neal, ordained Oct. 27, 1935; dismissed to Graham, Sept. 29, 1946.
Francis Law, ordained Oct. 27, 1935; elected an elder, Feb. 7, 1954.
Garret Neal, ordained about 1940; dismissed to Leaksville, Oct. 12, 1947.
Preston Harralson, ordained about 1940; elected an elder, Feb. 7, 1954.
E. W. James, ordained fourth Sunday, May, 1942.
Van Daniel, Jr.; ordained fourth Sunday, May 1942.
Robert L. Neal, Jr.; ordained fourth Sunday, May 1942.
David Neal, ordained about 1944.
Elwood Clayton, ordained 1944; elected an elder, Feb. 7, 1954.

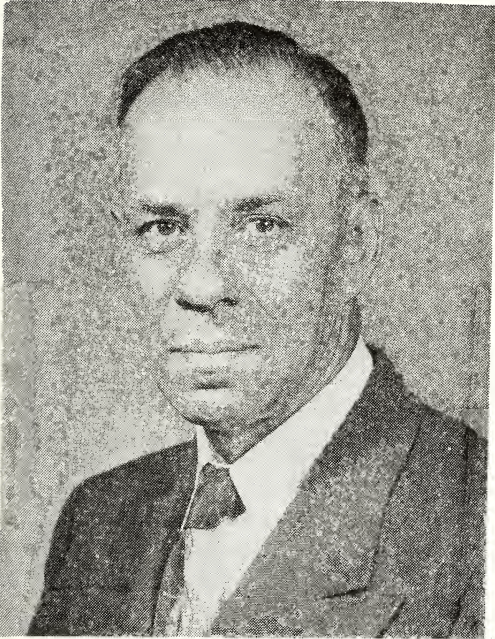
ELDERS ORDAINED BETWEEN 1932-1944

Charles Law, Sr.; ordained Oct. 27, 1935.
Dr. J. H. Thacker, ordained fourth Sunday, May, 1942.
U. E. Paschal, ordained fourth Sunday, May, 1942.

CHAPTER VII

Mr. Womeldorf At Bethesda And Yanceyville

1945-1951



REV. HERMAN JAMES WOMELDORF

During most of its history the Bethesda Church has shared a minister with at least one other church; and in the years from 1908 to 1944, it shared a minister with three other churches — Yanceyville, Griers, and Pleasant Grove. Having four churches in one field made it easier to pay the minister's salary, but it imposed a great work load upon the minister and greatly limited the program possibilities of all the churches. Mr. Whitley had strongly recommended the division of the field; and following his departure in May of 1945, the officers of the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches met together to discuss the feasibility of the two churches forming a field to call a minister of their own. Favoring this arrangement and believing that the two churches were now strong enough financially to call a minister without aid from the Presbytery, the officers recommended to the congregations

that they join in calling a minister. The congregations made an affirmative response.

The man recommended for a call by the pulpit committees of the two churches was the Rev. Herman J. Womeldorf, pastor of the South Frankfort Church, Frankfort, Ky. In drawing up its call, Bethesda promised a salary of \$1,350, payments to the Ministers' Annuity Fund, and thirty days vacation. Accepting the calls of the two churches, Mr. Womeldorf moved to the manse in Yanceyville with his family on November 12, 1945. His first sermon at Bethesda, titled "Giving Thanks in Time of Trouble," was preached on the fourth Sunday in November.

The installation service for Mr. Womeldorf at Bethesda was held at three p.m. on January 20, 1946. Dr. T. Henry Patterson, Executive Secretary of the Presbytery, presided; Dr. E. E. Gillespie preached the sermon from Galatians 6:10; the Rev. N. R. Claytor delivered the charge to the pastor; the Rev. G. Raymond Womeldorf, brother of the pastor and missionary to China, led in prayer; the Ruling Elder Holland McSwain charged the congregation. Elder Will Fitch of Yanceyville was also a member of the Commission.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE REV HERMAN JAMES WOMELDORF

Mr. Womeldorf was born in Lexington, Va., on July 27, 1901, the son of George William and Lillian Clements Womeldorf. After receiving his A.B. degree from Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., he served as principal of Consolidated School, Natural Bridge, Va. He entered Union Seminary, Richmond, Va., in 1927,

and was graduated with the B.D. degree in 1930. He was licensed and ordained by Winston-Salem Presbytery on June 21, 1930. After serving for one year as President of the Glade Valley School, Glade Valley, N. C., he accepted the pastorate of the North Fork Field, Lexington Presbytery (Va.), where he remained from 1931-1935. Other pastorates followed at the Fulton Church, Richmond, Va., (1935-37); Assistant Pastor, Winchester, Va. (1937-41); Homles Church, Bayview, Va. (1941-42); and South Frankfort Church, Frankfort, Ky. (1942-45).

Mr. Womeldorf was married to Miss Ruth Neal Walker of Columbia, Miss., on June 17, 1937. Mrs. Womeldorf, who was active in both women's work and youth work at Bethesda, was a graduate of the University of Mississippi and the Assembly's Training School. (The Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers, now called the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, is located directly across the street from the Seminary. Courtships between the students of these two schools so often blossom into matrimony that the two schools are often called "The Match Factory". It was while Mr. and Mrs. Womeldorf were students at these schools that they met; and it was also while students at these same institutions that Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Lytch met.) Mr. and Mrs. Womeldorf have two children: Ann Neal, born August 4, 1939; and Herman James, Jr., born May 15, 1942.

GROWTH OF THE TWO CHURCHES

Mr. Womeldorf was a personable and energetic man who did not hesitate to go into the fields or wherever the people were to bear his witness for Christ and the Church; and his approach was most fruitful. Additions at Bethesda during his pastorate totaled forty-seven, and the number at Yanceyville was sixty-six. Unfortunately, the losses at both churches during these same years were heavy, so that the lack of net gains in membership do not accurately reflect the good work done in the area of evangelism by Mr. Womeldorf. Fortunately, on the other hand, many of those added at Bethesda under him have remained faithful and valuable members through the ensuing years.

The forty-seven persons received at Bethesda by Mr. Womeldorf were as follows: Sidney Edward Law; Mrs. O. W. Manuel (nee Mary Scott Blackwell); Mrs. Nelson Daniel (nee Mary Jacqueline Jones); Mrs. Wharton Lillard; Mrs. Kenneth Hodges (nee Annie Laurie Lillard); Mrs. Wayne Handy (nee Marjorie Smith); Thad Harrelson; Albert Edward Lillard; Kenneth Johnson; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Sr.; W. H. Hatchett, Jr.; J. D. Foster; Malcolm Harrelson; Mrs. Mary Lou Harrelson; Mrs. William I. Reagan (nee Betty Jean Harrelson); Mrs. H. T. Harrelson, Sr.; James W. Paschal; Mrs. J. H. Thacker; Mr. and Mrs. G. L. Ashworth; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Jr.; Mrs. J. L. Foster; George William Hodges; Mrs. Sam Hudson; Mrs. Glenn Conrad (nee Geraldine Matherly); Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Guest, Sr.; Charles Guest, Jr.; Christian Carolyn Custer; Mrs. Lewis McGee (nee Annette Law); Earl Hodges; Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Jones; Mr. John Hudson; Billy Loflin; Mr. and Mrs. Clem Shelton; Mr. and Mrs. Sammy Strader; Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr.; Bailey Chance; Joseph Jones; Harvey Chaney, Jr.; Anne Lois Shelton; Mrs. Douglas Vaughn (nee Carolyn Marie Jones); and Jerry Lee Shelton.

Early in the pastorate of Mr. Womeldorf, the Bethesda officers gave considerable thought to the possibility of purchasing a bus to provide transportation to church for prospective members, but a religious survey of the community revealed no pressing need for such a bus, and the idea was dropped.

Some of the individuals and families named above were first reached by the church through the Daily Vacation Bible Schools promoted by Mr. Womeldorf. The first Bible School at Bethesda was held during Mr. Whitley's pastorate, but it was during Mr. Womeldorf's ministry that the school became an established annual summer activity.

In the area of giving, both churches registered healthy and permanent gains under Mr. Womeldorf. Bethesda's total giving went from \$2,507 in 1944-45, to \$5,908 in 1950-51, with the total yearly average from 1946-1951 being approximately \$5,678. Benevolence gifts during these same years averaged \$1,100. At the Yanceyville Church, total gifts climbed from \$2,372 in 1944-45, to \$5,359 in 1950-51; and in 1946-47, when the church completed several special projects, total gifts were \$7,371. The average total giving per year at Yanceyville from 1946-1951 was \$6,077, while gifts to benevolences averaged \$950 per year.

An incident that happened in the morning worship service at Bethesda on the first Sunday in November, 1945, is perhaps indicative of the growing concern for stewardship manifested by the congregation under Mr. Womeldorf. In passing the offering plates on this particular Sunday the ushers unintentionally overlooked Van Daniel, III, about four years old at the time, who was sitting at the rear of the sanctuary. But "Mack" was determined that his offering should be received; and after the plates had been returned to the table at the front of the sanctuary, he came forward all alone to deposit his offering. After commending "Mack" for his action, the pastor said to the congregation, "And a little child shall lead them".

In connection with the finances of the church, a number of individuals served as Church Treasurer during Mr. Womeldorf's pastorate. After serving for thirty-five years, Miss Bessie Wright resigned as Church Treasurer in March, 1947, whereupon the church presented her with a wrist watch as a token of appreciation. (Miss Wright had also served for many years as Sunday School Treasurer, and she continued in this office until 1961, at which time William Irvin Reagan was elected as her successor.) R. L. Neal, Jr. was elected to succeed Miss Wright as Church Treasurer and served until April, 1949. Hugh C. Wright then served for one year; and in March, 1950, Elwood Clayton was elected. Mr. Clayton continued in this capacity until Dec. 31, 1961, at which time Hugh C. Wright again became treasurer — a position in which he has continued until the present.

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS AND ADDITIONS

Some of the improvements from 1945 to 1951 have already been mentioned; i. e., the installation of a central heating system at the manse, the acquisition of the Scout hut, and the installation of the rebuilt organ originally given by Mrs. Dibrell. But there were other improvements and additions which deserve a word of explanation. The cemetery, which had become a sore sight for any eyes, was greatly enlarged and a beginning was made on cleaning it up. (At the Yanceyville Church, the cemetery was not only improved immensely, but a good start was made in setting up a perpetual care fund.) Another improvement at Bethesda under Mr. Womeldorf was the shortening and revarnishing of the church pews. When the new sanctuary was built on the same dimensions as the old it was thought that the old pews could be used again without alteration; but the walls of the new sanctuary were thicker, and the pews proved too long. In 1948, they were shortened and revarnished in a successful effort to make them more attractive in the new sanctuary. At the same time, a few short pews, needed in the old sanctuary, were lengthened to match the other pews in the new.

In 1950, the family of Mrs. Bettie Womack placed a beautiful table in the vestibule in memory of Rufus Womack, who died on August 27, 1948.

In the years from 1945-51, a number of important and beautiful items were placed in the sanctuary to aid the congregation in its worship. Two sterling silver offering plates and two sets of sterling candelabra were presented to the church in 1950 by Mr. and Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr., in memory of their daughter, Frances Lamb. (A set of brass offering plates, given some years ago in honor of Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Neal, Sr. by their children, served the church for many years before

the new plates were given. In earlier years, when the church had no offering plates, the offerings were received, literally, by "passing the hat".) In 1948, the Baptismal Font was given by Mrs. Bert Bennett, Sr. in memory of her mother, Mrs. Cora Williamson Johnson, the latter a daughter of Anthony Williamson, Bethesda Elder from 1863-1888.

ORGANIZATION OF THE OAKVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

One of Mr. Womeldorf's finest achievements in Caswell County centered about the organization of a new Presbyterian Sunday school and church on Highway 62 about eight miles south of Yanceyville. Concerned about the fact that no Sunday school was serving this area of the county, Mr. Womeldorf arranged for a religious survey of the community by Miss Anyce Kellam of Synod's Office to see if there would be enough interest to justify trying to start a Sunday school. When the survey revealed that there were as many as one hundred people interested in such a project, Mr. Womeldorf brought together a group of concerned individuals from the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches to consider the possibility of the two churches sponsoring an outpost Sunday school in the area. Attending the March 9, 1948 meeting from the Bethesda Church were these: Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr.; Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Clayton; Miss Cora and Preston Harralson; Miss Hester and Rufus Womack; and Mr. Francis Law. Also meeting with the group were Miss Kellams, who conducted the survey, and Dr. T. Henry Patterson, Executive Secretary of Orange Presbytery.

Strongly favoring the organization of a Sunday school in the area, the group voted to have both churches sponsor the project; but they realized that the Yanceyville Church, by virtue of location, would have to provide most of the leadership for the project. A building Committee was named, and it consisted of Mr. C. C. Cole, Mrs. W. R. Grey and Mr. C. D. Covington of the Yanceyville Church, and Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr., of Bethesda. Mrs. Charles Law, Sr. was named from Bethesda to work with members of the Yanceyville Church in helping to organize the Sunday school.

The organization of the Sunday school took place on March 21, 1948, in a tenant house, and Mr. C. D. Covington was named as Superintendent. The leaders of the project had agreed in advance that they would sing the Doxology if as many as thirty people were present for the organization meeting. The number present that morning was sixty-four, and the Doxology was sung with real enthusiasm. Attendance quickly surpassed the one-hundred mark, and just as quickly the need was felt for more adequate facilities. A lot for a church building in the community was purchased and donated by Mr. C. C. Cole, and an old army barracks donated by the Presbytery was moved to the site by the men of the community, with Mr. Womeldorf taking a personal hand in all that was done. Sunday school was held in this newly acquired building for the first time in August, 1948.

Permission was granted to Mr. Womeldorf by the Yanceyville and Bethesda Sessions to preach at the new outpost on Sunday nights as often as he felt necessary. Soon, the people of the new outpost began to think in terms of organizing as a church and calling a minister. The desire to become an organized church continued to grow, and on August 6, 1950, the Presbytery sent a commission to effect the organization. At this organizational meeting the name Oakview Presbyterian Church was adopted for the new church, and Mr. Womeldorf was asked to serve as Temporary Supply until a minister could be called. Mr. Womeldorf continued in this role until he moved to a new work in Spartanburg, S. C., in January of 1951. In its Statistical Report to Orange Presbytery for 1964, the Oakview Church reported a membership of forty-four and total contributions of \$2,537.

PRESBYTERY MEETINGS AT BETHESDA

Bethesda has had the honor of acting as host to the meetings of Orange Presbytery on at least seven occasions: June 19-24, 1850; November, 1856; November, 1864; November (?) 1871; October 18-18, 1927; October 10, 1939; and October 10, 1950. At the October, 1950 meeting, the retiring moderator was Mr. Womeldorf. The next meeting of Presbytery at Bethesda will be on July 15, 1965, in connection with the church's celebration of its bi-centennial.

In earlier years when travel was slow, Presbytery met only twice per year; but the sessions lasted for several days. Consequently, host churches had to plan not only for the meetings at the church but also for the overnight accommodations of the Presbyters. When Presbytery met at Bethesda for these long sessions, the congregation tried to provide the most convenient accommodations possible by calling not only upon its own members near the church, but upon members of other churches as well. A resolution passed by the Presbytery after the October 18-19, 1927 meeting at Bethesda took notice of this assistance from friends of other churches: "Orange Presbytery wishes to express to the Bethesda Church and to other friends of the church in the community who have so graciously entertained us, its most grateful thanks for the gracious way in which they have entertained this body".

The long meetings of Presbytery were often remembered by the local congregation for much more than the work involved in entertaining this body, for these meetings often became occasions of inspiration for the entire congregation as they joined the Presbytery in its worship. Writing about the June, 1850, meeting, Mr. Stephen Neal, Clerk of the Bethesda Session, had this to say: "The Presbytery of Orange met at Bethesda on the 19th June 1850, and closed its labors on the 24th. We had a full attendance and very harmonious meeting. On Sabbath the crowd was so large it was thought best to hold Divine Service in the house and at the stand at the same time. The communion at the stand was exceedingly solemn and impressive".

RESIGNATION OF MR. WOMELDORF

After receiving and accepting a call from the Routh Memorial Presbyterian Church of Spartanburg, S. C., Mr. Womeldorf submitted his resignation to the Bethesda Church at a Congregational meeting on January 7, 1951. His last sermon at Bethesda was on Sunday night, January 14, 1951, at 7:30; and on Wednesday, Jan. 17, he and his family moved to Spartanburg.

Following Mr. Womeldorf's departure, the Yanceyville Session adopted a resolution of appreciation in which his ministry at the two churches was well summarized. Let us now quote from that resolution.

"The Rev. Herman J. Womeldorf accepted the pastorate of the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches in October 1945, and came to our churches from Frankfort, Ky. He continued as pastor to January 15, 1951, thus serving our churches about five and one-half years. Mr. Womeldorf was the first pastor (since Mr. Doll) to give his full time to the churches . . . He preached twice a month regularly at the two churches and during a part of his ministry services were held at each church every Sunday. The increased number of services, with his faithful and effective pastoral work, caused both churches to grow stronger in numbers and in Christian stature. His genuine love for people, his smile and ever-ready and friendly word, won for him a sure place in the heart of the whole community.

"The physical plant of both the manse and churches were greatly improved during his stay with us and his abounding energy and good judgment furnished the impetus for these improvements. A basement was dug under a part of the manse and an automatic oil burning furnace was installed. (The excavation of the basement

was done for the most part by Mr. Womeldorf himself.) Valuable improvements to the church property and grounds were made at both churches.

"The outstanding spiritual outreach of our churches during Mr. Womeldorf's pastorate is evidenced by the organization of the Oakview Presbyterian Church under the sponsorship of Yanceyville and Bethesda on August 6, 1950.

"Mr. Womeldorf has been a faithful Presbyter, serving as Moderator of Orange Presbytery for its 360th Stated Session. He was elected a commissioner and represented his Presbytery at the 89th Session of the General Assembly, which met at Montreat, N. C., in 1949. (Also representing Orange Presbytery at this meeting was Ruling Elder R. L. Neal, Sr. of Bethesda.) His most outstanding work in the Presbytery, however, has been in the youth work. He has been a member of the Board of Trustees of Camp New Hope since its appointment and gave able leadership and help in the development of the camp. He directed Pioneer camps two years; and, in 1950, he served as director of the conference for young people. He has served as a member of the Religious Education Committee of the Presbytery for five years and on various other committees and important commissions.

"As a man and citizen he has worked at all times to make our community and county a better and happier place to live. He gave a helping hand to every worthwhile project of the community. He was an active member of the Rotary Club and served one term as its president. He represented our county at the National Convention of Rotarians in 1949.

"It would be impossible to say all that his life and ministry and the influence of his home has meant to our church and community. Mrs. Womeldorf, Ann, and Jimmy helped in building an ideal Christian home in our midst and we shall always be grateful that God sent the Womeldorfs our way".

Mr. Womeldorf served as pastor of the Routh Memorial Church in Spartanburg, S. C., from January, 1951 until April, 9, 1958. While serving this church, he was also professor of Religion at Converse College from 1951-1955. The Routh Memorial Church experienced a healthy growth in every way under his leadership, with the membership increasing from ninety-two in 1951 to two-hundred and eighty-six in 1958, and the budget going from \$7,398 to \$20,399 in these same years. On April 9, 1958, Mr. Womeldorf and his family moved to Charleston, S. C., where he became pastor of the St. Andrews Church. He has continued as pastor of this church until the present, and the growth of this church under his energetic leadership has been phenomenal. The membership has grown from 362 in 1957, to 725 in 1963; and the budget has increased in this same time from \$18,277 to \$54,000. Under Mr. Womeldorf the church has completed an extensive building program; and the church plant is now valued at \$300,000.

In 1954, Mr. Womeldorf took his family to Scotland, where he supplied a church for the summer. In 1964, Mr. and Mrs. Womeldorf had the pleasure of touring the Holy Land.

DEACONS ORDAINED BETWEEN 1945 AND 1951

J. B. Watlington, ordained July 3, 1949; died February 25, 1943. A resolution adopted by the session in appreciation of Mr. Watlington's services to the church reads in part as follows: "On August 1, 1909, James Bracken Watlington made a decision that was to last for life. On this day he became a member of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church. In his quiet way he continued to make his presence felt in the church school and also at the worship services. He was loyal to his convictions and often expressed his lofty ideals without saying a word".

Harralson Hatchett, Sr., ordained July 3, 1949.

Hurley Stanley, ordained July 3, 1949; ordained an Elder, August 14, 1960.

TRUSTEES ELECTED ON APRIL 24, 1949

No Ruling Elders were elected during Mr. Womeldorf's pastorate, but Mr. Charles Law Sr., and Mr. Jule Stanley were elected as Trustees of the Church on April 24, 1949. Already serving as a Trustee at the time was Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr.

THE REV. ROBERT MURPHY WILLIAMS

At the time of Mr. Womeldorf's resignation on Jan. 27, 1951, a Pulpit Nominating Committee was elected by the congregation to work with a committee from the Yanceyville Church in searching for a suitable minister to be recommended to the two congregations for a call. Members of the Bethesda Committee were Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr.; Elwood Clayton; Mrs. Charles Law, Sr.; Miss Hester Womack; and J. D. Foster. While the committees were at work, the Rev. R. Murphy Williams, retired Presbyterian minister of Greensboro, N. C., was engaged by the two churches to supply each pulpit twice monthly. Mr. Williams, pastor emeritus of the Covenant Church in Greensboro, continued to serve with effectiveness until April, 1952, at which time the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches called the Rev. Cecil Callis. One member, Mr. R. B. Chance, was received under Mr. Williams. It was during Mr. Williams' brief relationship with the church that the Women of the Church installed new lighting fixtures in the sanctuary and placed the carpet on the sanctuary floor.

Mr. Williams placed great emphasis in his preaching upon the practical expression of religion in daily life; and in one of his last sermons at the two churches, he challenged the congregations to undertake a stronger ministry to the sick, the invalid and the aged in the community, and to show more concern for the persons living in homes for the aged. He suggested that the churches would do well to purchase wheel chairs and hospital beds to loan to those in the community who needed such aids; he further recommended that the churches help to provide furnishings for the Presbyterian Home at High Point. The Yanceyville Church responded by purchasing a wheel chair and naming it for Mr. Williams, The Bethesda Congregation responded by sending four wrought-iron settes to the Presbyterian Home for use out-of-doors. Attached to the settes were plaques with these words: "Presented by Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Ruffin, N. C., in honor of R. Murphy William, 1952."

Another practical means by which Mr. Williams sought to get the Bethesda Congregation to express its faith was through continuing with the project begun under Mr. Womeldorf of cleaning up the cemetery and providing for its upkeep. Few preaching Sundays passed in which he did not make reference in the announcements or sermon or prayers to the need for improving the cemetery and establishing a perpetual care fund. Finally, the congregation came to share his concern, and a committee consisting of D. W. Wright, Sr.; C. J. Law, Sr.; Tom Neal, Jr.; Miss Hester Womack; Miss Cora Harralson; Hurley Stanley; and W. H. Hatchett, Sr. was appointed to seek the goals recommended by Mr. Williams. In an effort to raise the funds necessary for financing the improvements and establishing a perpetual care fund, the committee attempted to contact every person known to have relatives buried in the cemetery to ask for donations. The church officers had agreed that half the funds received would be used to finance immediate improvements and that the other half would be placed in a perpetual care fund. Mr. D. W. Wright, Sr. was named as treasurer of the fund. It is not known definitely how much was received in this effort, but the amount in the perpetual care fund at the end of 1964 was \$1,670.38. The immediate improvements to the cemetery took place under Mr. Callis and will be discussed at that point.

CEMETERY REGULATIONS

From time to time the church officers have drawn up certain regulations governing the use of the cemetery, and this is a good point to mention them. On April 11, 1937, the officers ruled that ordinarily, only persons who had been members of Bethesda would be buried at the front of the cemetery. At this same time George Neal was appointed to supervise the cemetery. On May 31, 1954, the elders and deacons approved the following price schedule for cemetery lots: for members of Bethesda, \$20 per lot and \$100 per six lots, with the church to assume responsibility for members not able to pay this cost; for persons not members of Bethesda: \$49 per lot, with the undertaker to be responsible for collecting this amount. At a joint meeting of the Bethesda officers on April 4, 1965, the officers reaffirmed these regulations; and Mr. Hurley Stanley was elected by the Session to supervise the cemetery and the enforcement of these regulations.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. CALLIS AND THE LORD'S ACRE PLAN

1952-1958



REV. CECIL CALLIS

The Lord's Acre Plan is a program in which each member of the church is asked to undertake some money-making project with a view to giving the profit to the church. With farmers these projects usually consist of crops or livestock, and with other members they may range from baking cakes to raising dogs. Generally used by members to supplement their regular giving, this stewardship method is sometimes described as "second-mile giving". It is particularly valuable to a church when it attempts to raise funds for some special project such as building a manse.

The Lord's Acre Plan was begun as an interdenominational movement among country churches in western North Carolina in 1930. It was developed under the auspices of the religious department of Farmers Federation; and, in the Providence of

God, its use spread over the United States into Canada and into many mission fields.

The Lord's Acre Plan was first introduced at Bethesda in 1954, under the leadership of the Rev. Cecil Callis, pastor of the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches from April, 1952, to September 1, 1958. The plan had met with success in a number of neighboring churches, and Mr. Callis and others thought it would appeal to the Bethesda members. According to Mr. Callis, who first spoke to the congregation on the subject at a Family Night Supper on February 26, 1954, the plan was recommended for two reasons: "(1) To teach stewardship showing God's ownership of all things, and (2) to increase the church's income, believing that this would enable the church to engage in a wider program of service." After the officers had given their blessings to the plan, the congregation was invited to participate in it. The first Lord's Acre offering was received on Thanksgiving Day, 1954, with receipts totaling \$679. Receipts in 1955, the second year of the plan, totaled \$584. The proceeds from the 1954 offering were used to improve the cemetery (more about this later); and almost all of the 1955 offering was placed in the church treasury to be used at a later date for whatever purpose the session might decide. (Part of the 1955 offering was used to place a water cooler in the educational building; the remainder was used in 1962 to add a second restroom in the same building.)

After 1955 the congregation's interest in the Lord's Acre Plan waned, and for the next several years it was allowed to lapse. In 1959, the plan was reactivated for the purpose of helping the congregation build a manse and call a full-time minister in 1965.

The introduction of the Lord's Acre Plan at Bethesda was only one of a number of important contributions by Mr. Callis to the life of the church, and it is appropriate at this point that we consider the entirety of his ministry at Bethesda.

MR. CALLIS IS CALLED AS PASTOR

It sometimes happens that a pulpit committee must travel many miles and visit with a large number of prospective ministers before finding an available minister whom the committee can recommend to the congregation for a call; and this was indeed the experience of the Bethesda and Yanceyville Pulpit Committees as they sought a successor to Mr. Womeldorf. With their search covering more than a year, the committees visited ministers as near as Burlington, N. C., and as distant as the state of West Va. before calling upon Mr. Callis. After visiting him at the Mallows Presbyterian Church near Covington, Va., both committees wholeheartedly endorsed him for a call; and the Bethesda Congregation met on March 2, 1952, to act affirmatively upon this recommendation. The terms of Mr. Callis' call to Bethesda were as follows: Salary, \$2,000; payments to the Ministers' Annuity Fund; and thirty days vacation. The Yanceyville terms were much the same. To the delight of both congregations, Mr. Callis accepted the calls. And on April 28, 1952, he and his family moved into the manse at Yanceyville. Mr. Callis' first sermon at Bethesda was preached on May 4 at 11 a.m. His text was from Philippians 3:13-14: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". The schedule of preaching services followed by Mr. Callis throughout his ministry at Bethesda was as follows: first and fourth Sundays at 11 a.m. and second and third Sundays at night.

After being examined and received by Orange Presbytery on July 8, Mr. Callis was installed as pastor of the Yanceyville and Bethesda Churches on July 20, 1952, with the Yanceyville service at 11 a.m. and the Bethesda service at 3 p.m. The Commission assigned by Presbytery to carry out this function consisted of these: Elder Dan J. Dalker of Burlington who presided; Dr. E. E. Gillespie, who preached from Acts 16:30; the Rev. Chester Alexander, who charged the minister; Elder S. M. Bason, who charged the congregation; and Elder D. W. Wright, Sr.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE REV. CECIL C. CALLIS

Mr. Callis was born at Willow Springs, Wake County, N. C., on May 13, 1923, the son of Mr. and Mrs. James Royal Callis. After two years at Presbyterian Junior College, Maxton, N. C., he attended Presbyterian College, Clinton, S. C., where he received his degree in 1944. He was awarded his B.D. degree by Union Seminary, Richmond, Va., in 1947; and ordination was by Winston-Salem Presbytery on May 4, 1947. He spent his first two and one-half years following ordination in Home Mission work in Ashe County, N. C.; and from 1949-1952, he was pastor of the Mallows Presbyterian Church, Covington, Va.

He was married to Miss Julia Sullivan of Raleigh, N. C., in August, 1946. They have three daughters: Julia Cecile, born July 17, 1947; Mary Robin, born June 20, 1951; and Chris Sullivan, born Nov. 17, 1957.

During his six years in Caswell County, Mr. Callis was active in civic and educational as well as religious affairs. As a member of the Yanceyville Rotary Club he served one term as secretary and treasurer; and when he left the county, he was the club's president. He was a member of the executive committee of the local P.T.A. and served as a member of the County Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He was Dean of several very successful Area Leadership Schools held at Bethesda, and was faithful in attending summer camps and conferences as a director or counselor.

In August of 1955, Mr. Callis was given a new automobile by the Bethesda and Yanceyville Congregations as an expression of their appreciation for his faithfulness in carrying out his pastoral duties.

PROGRESS AT BETHESDA AND YANCEYVILLE

In the six year pastorate of Mr. Callis at Bethesda, a total of forty-two members were added to the roll of the church, with the membership increasing from 113 in 1952 to 136 in 1958, a net gain of twenty-three members. At the Yanceyville Church the additions under Mr. Callis numbered forty-four; but because of losses by transfer and other causes, the church's membership total changed very little from 1952 to 1958.

Members received under Mr. Callis at Bethesda include the following: Mr. and Mrs. David Neal (David received back "home"); Ellen and Virginia Rice; Sarah, Nellie, Mary and Dorothy Hall; Mrs. Donald Orr; Mrs. John F. Smith; Mrs. Paul Jones; Mary Carolyn Law; Mrs. Larry Giles (nee LaRue Harrelson); Mrs. John Stillman, III (nee Judy Jones); Mrs. John ("Bill") Apple (nee Anita Jones); Van Daniel, III; Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Hodges; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Page; Kenneth Hodges; Mrs. I. L. Harrelson; Mrs. Albert ("Buddy") Lillard; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pettigrew, Sr.; Henry Pettigrew, Jr.; Mrs. J. D. Foster; Mrs. Earl Hodges; Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cook; Mrs. Thad Harrelson; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith; Mrs. Douglas Harrelson; Mrs. David Wright, Jr.; David Doyle; Mr. Henry Harrelson; Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. William Hodges; Mr. H. T. Harrelson, Sr.; and Mr. J. L. Foster.

Total giving in both the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches showed a good increase under Mr. Callis. At Bethesda, total gifts averaged approximately \$6,000 per year, with an average of \$1,370 per year going to benevolences. At the Yanceyville Church, total gifts averaged \$9,350 per year, with \$1,612 per year, on the average, going to benevolences.

PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS AT BETHESDA

A major project at Bethesda during the pastorate of Mr. Callis was the improvement of the cemetery. With the aid of Lord's Acre money from 1954 and solicitations from people with relatives buried at Bethesda, a major face-lifting was given the cemetery in 1956. Several large trees and numerous small ones were removed from the grounds, and fences surrounding family plots were taken down. The cemetery was laid off in plots, and a price schedule for the sale of lots was approved (mentioned earlier). A few tombstones were repaired, and many were straightened up.

In 1953, the first restroom was added to the church; and it was made possible by the gifts and work of the Men's Bible Class. A bronze cross and two vases were presented to the church in 1953, in memory of Mr. J. B. Watlington by his wife and children. The seeding of the church yard and the planting of shrubbery around the church was accomplished in 1954; and in the same year, iron railings were placed beside all outside steps and around the front porch. It was also in 1954 that the Women of the Church completely remodeled the kitchen at the church, at which time they added a new electric range, a sink, and hot and cold water, and placed tile on the floor. The runners on the pulpit and communion table were gifts of the Young Adult Sunday School Class in 1955.

On July 22, 1956, a historical marker was unveiled on Highway 158, near the church, in commemoration of Bethesda's 191st anniversary. The presentation on behalf of the State was made by State Archivist Houston Jones, a native of the Bethesda Community. It was received on behalf of the Bethesda Congregation and dedicated with prayer by Mr. Callis. The unveiling was by Mr. Houston Jones and

his brother, Mr. W. J. Jones, the latter a deacon at Bethesda. A history of the church that had been prepared by Miss Hester Womack was read by Mr. D. W. Wright, Jr.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

One of the most controversial questions ever to face our denomination as a whole had to do with union between the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (Southern) and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Northern). This question came to a vote before the Presbyteries and the General Assembly of our denomination while Mr. Callis was at Bethesda. Interest and feelings about the question ran high throughout the membership of the denomination, and the Bethesda Congregation was no exception. Some of the forces in the denomination opposed to union urged local sessions to send their representatives to Presbytery with instructions to vote against the question, and ministers throughout the General Assembly had to wrestle with the matter of trying to help their sessions understand that it is illegal within the framework of Presbyterian government to send representatives to a meeting of a church court with instructions on how to vote. (The Book of Church Orders calls for sending representatives who shall be free to vote their convictions under the leadership of the Holy Spirit; while to send an individual with instructions for voting changes him into a delegate. Furthermore, to instruct a person in advance as to how he is to vote rules out the possibility of receiving any further light from the deliberations of the church court where the vote is being taken.) The Bethesda Session was not spared the same struggle that occurred in so many similar bodies across the denomination; but in the end, a representative was sent with freedom to vote as he felt led. The important meeting of the Bethesda Session in which the issue was settled was held on January 6, 1955, and the elder chosen to represent Bethesda at Presbytery was Mr. Elwood Clayton. When all Presbyteries had cast their votes, the question was lost.

Another significant development at Bethesda under Mr. Callis was the discontinuing of one of the assembly periods at Sunday school. Prior to December, 1957, the Sunday school held an assembly both before and after classes. Believing that the time from one of these assemblies might better be given over to class time, the session recommended that the Sunday school experiment for six months with holding only a closing assembly, beginning in January, 1957. The experiment proved advantageous and acceptable, and the practice of only one assembly per Sunday became standard procedure.

MR. CALLIS RESIGNS

Mr. Callis preached his final sermon at Bethesda on Sunday morning, August 24, 1958. Following the worship service a congregational meeting was held to vote concurrence with him in his request to Orange Presbytery to dissolve his pastoral relationship with Bethesda in order that he might accept a call to the Easley, S. C., Presbyterian Church. After the congregation had reluctantly voted its concurrence, Miss Cora HARRISON presented Mr. Callis a sterling silver pitcher on behalf of the entire congregation as an expression of appreciation for his services. Mr. Callis' resignation as pastor of the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches became effective September 1, 1958; and on September 3, he and his family moved to Easley.

After announcing his decision to move to Easley, S. C., Mr. Callis and his family received many expressions of regret that they were leaving the county. By virtue of their friendliness and love of people, they had made many friends beyond the circle of Presbyterians.

Mr. Callis' stay at Easley was most productive, with the membership of the

church increasing from 252 at the end of 1958 to 371 at the end of 1963. Total gifts in this period went from \$36,979 to \$55,540. Another accomplishment at Easley was the building of a new manse.

On May 17, 1965, Mr. Callis was extended a call by Orange Presbytery to develop a Presbyterian Church on property owned by Presbytery in a fast-growing residential area of High Point, N. C. Mr. Callis has indicated his acceptance of this call, and it is expected that he will be received back into Orange Presbytery at the July 15, 1965 meeting to be held at Bethesda.

DEACONS ORDAINED FROM 1952 TO 1958

James Y. Blackwell, Jr.; ordained April 4, 1954.

W. J. Jones; ordained April 4, 1954.

Sam Hudson; ordained April 4, 1954.

David Neal; ordained in 1944; was reinstated as Deacon on April 4, 1954, following his return to Bethesda from the First Presbyterian Church of Leaksville, N. C.

David W. Wright, Jr.; ordained August 24, 1958; ordained elder, August 14, 1960.

J. D. Foster; ordained August 24, 1958.

Douglas Harrelson; ordained August 24, 1958.

ELDERS ORDAINED FROM 1952 TO 1958

Elwood Clayton; ordained April 4, 1954; elected Clerk of the Session, August 27, 1961.

Preston Harralson; ordained April 4, 1954.

Francis Law; ordained April 4, 1954.

TEMPORARY SUPPLY MINISTERS

In the months between September, 1953, when the Rev. Cecil Callis left the field, and May, 1959, when the Rev. W. E. Lytch became the pastor, the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches were served by two temporary supplies, the Rev. D. Lee Williamson and the Rev. Ralph Doermann. Mr. Williamson, the son of missionaries of our denomination to Brazil and a graduate student at U.N.C., Chapel Hill, preached his first sermon at Bethesda on September 7, 1958. He continued preaching every first and fourth Sundays until the time of his death on January 18, 1959. His death resulted from injuries which he received when his car ran off the road and overturned. The accident occurred near the Cedar Grove Elementary School on Highway 86 as Mr. Williamson was returning to Chapel Hill from his preaching appointment at the Yanceyville Church. The consensus is that Mr. Williamson probably fell asleep at the wheel of his small foreign-made car. He was admitted to Memorial Hospital, Chapel Hill, at 1:15 p.m. and died late Sunday night. Funeral services were held at the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, N. C., on January 20, and burial was in the church cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the Bethesda Congregation sent a cash donation of \$200 to Mrs. Williamson to help with expenses.

In response to the gift, Mrs. Williamson wrote a letter to the Bethesda Congregation under date of February 29, 1959, saying:

"How can I tell you how much the love gift from the Bethesda Church has meant to me. How very kind of you all. If I knew all who shared in the gift, I would write each personally. Thank you, each of you, for this evidence of your love for Lee. It has meant so much to me. I shall not forget this kindness. Lee's sister and I will leave for Brazil in early March to visit Lee's parents. (Mr. Williamson's parents were unable to attend the funeral.) I hope all of you will feel free to come by to see us anytime before I leave. Again, my sincere thanks. Lovingly, (signed) Nancy Williamson".

The Rev. Ralph Doermann, Lutheran minister engaged in graduate work at Duke Divinity School, Durham, preached for the first time at Bethesda on February 1, 1959, and continued preaching twice monthly until the arrival of Mr. Lytch in May, 1959. An excellent preacher, Mr. Doermann was well received by both the Bethesda and Yanceyville Congregations. On Mr. Doermann's last Sunday at Bethesda, May 3, 1959, the following message from him appeared in the morning bulletin:

"The important thing in the Church is not so much who preaches as the fact that the Word of God is proclaimed. For where the Word is preached in its truth and purity, there the Holy Spirit is active. The next time you worship together you will have a new minister, but the same Spirit will be present among you, calling, admonishing, and urging you on to deeper, fuller Christian life. It is of vital importance that you listen to Him — no matter who stands in the pulpit.

"I am sorry to be leaving you, yet happy that you have obtained a full-time pastor. It is my prayer that God will use him as a means to enable you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.'

"Has my stay here been worthwhile? Only time will tell. If you have been strengthened in faith and have become more dedicated to Christ and His Church, as I hope you have, then this will show in your Church attendance and in your whole-hearted cooperation with your new pastor. For a Christian's allegiance is to God and His kingdom — not to any particular man. I thank you for your many kindnesses and I will continually 'thank God for every remembrance of you'. May He bless each one of you richly. Signed — Ralph Doermann".

CHAPTER IX

ONWARD TOWARDS 1965

1959-1965

Before leaving Caswell County, both Mr. Womeldorf and Mr. Callis expressed the belief that Bethesda ought to consider calling a full-time pastor to succeed them; and following Mr. Callis' resignation, a canvass was made of the congregation to see if the financial support was available to support such a venture. A majority of the congregation saw the need for calling a full-time minister, but many doubted that the church had prepared itself adequately for such an undertaking. The support promised in the canvass was inadequate to enable the church to call a full-time pastor at this juncture, but the seeds of desire for calling one had been well planted. These seed sprouted early in the pastorate of the next minister to lead the congregation to adopt as its primary goal for 1965, the church's bi-centennial year, the calling of a full-time minister.

When support for calling a full-time minister proved to be lacking after the departure of Mr. Callis, the officers recommended that the Bethesda Pulpit Nominating Committee unite its efforts with those of the Yanceyville Committee in looking for a minister to serve both churches. The Bethesda Committee was made up of the following members: Elwood Clayton, Chm.; Mrs. David Wright, Sr.; Mrs. Charles Law, Sr.; Miss Judy Jones; J. D. Foster; and Hurley Stanley. The committees proceeded in a most diligent manner with their assigned task, and on March 29, 1959, the Bethesda and Yanceyville Churches joined in calling as pastor the Rev. W. E. Lytch, Newell, N. C. These were the terms of the call from Bethesda: salary, \$2,250.00; car allowance, \$220.00; manse utilities allowance, \$265.00; one-half of annual premium on Group Medical Insurance; payments to Ministers' Annuity Fund; one month's vacation; and one-half the cost of moving from Newell to Yanceyville. The Yanceyville terms were the same.

After being examined and received by Orange Presbytery on July 16, 1959, Mr. Lytch was installed as pastor of the two churches on July 19, 1959. The Bethesda service was held at 9:30 a.m. and the Yanceyville service at 11 a.m. The Commission was made up of the following members: Rev. R. H. Stone, who presided; Dr. Chester Alexander, who preached; Rev. Reid Montgomery, who charged the congregations; Mr. T. H. Whitley, who charged the pastor at Bethesda; and Mr. Elwood Clayton, who charged the pastor at Yanceyville.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE REV. WILLIAM ELBERT LYTCH



Mr. Lytch was born on November 22, 1928, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Rufus L. Lytch of Maxton, N.C. After graduating from Lees-McRae College where he was in school with several of the present members of Bethesda, he enrolled at Presbyterian College, Clinton, S. C., where he graduated in 1949. From 1949-1952 he was a student at Union Seminary, Richmond, Va. On the day of graduation, May 20, 1952, he was married to Miss Priscilla Shorey of New Haven, Conn., who had graduated the previous night from the Assembly's Training School. Mr. and Mrs. Lytch have three children: William Leon ("Buddy"), born on May 2, 1953; Priscilla Lauren, born March 5, 1957; and Peter Shaw, born Jan. 30 1964. On Halloween night, Oct. 31, 1960, "Buddy" was struck and seriously injured by an automobile.

Mr. Lytch's first pastorate of three years was at Marion, N. C., where he served the Clinchfield, Story Memorial, and Drusilla Churches. He was ordained in the Clinchfield Church by a Commission of Concord Presbytery on July 27, 1952. From April 1955 to May 1959, he was the pastor of the Newell Church near Charlotte, North Carolina.

Since coming to Caswell County, Mr. Lytch has been active in the P. T. A., the Cub Scouts, and in a number of fund raising efforts for various charities. In the work of Orange Presbytery he has been particularly active in the Camp and Conference Program at Camp New Hope. In 1962, he was a commissioner from Orange Presbytery to the meeting of the General Assembly in Winston-Salem.

Mr. Lytch's first sermon at Bethesda was on May 17, 1959, and his subject was "Jesus' Last Desires for His Followers", based on John 17:1-26. The preaching schedule followed at Bethesda by Mr. Lytch was as follows: first and fourth Sundays at 11 A.M.; second and third Sundays at 9:30 A.M. At the Yanceyville Church he held 11 A.M. services on second and third Sundays; and beginning in Oct., 1962, he added a 9 A.M. service on first and fourth Sundays.

SUMMARY OF WORK AT BOTH CHURCHES

As of December 31, 1964, a total of forty-five members had been received at Bethesda under Mr. Lytch; and the membership as of that same date was 157. At the Yanceyville Church, a total of forty-one members were received through Easter, 1965. The membership of the Yanceyville Church at the end of 1964 was 117. The forty-five members received at Bethesda by Mr. Lytch were as follows: Mrs. W. E. Lytch; Miss Mary Lily Watlington; Mrs. Hugh C. Wright; Mrs. William Loflin; Rebecca Neal; Judy Page; Edward Page; Mrs. Jimmy Griffin (nee Cecelia Anne Neighbors); Mr. and Mrs. Turner Harrelson; Robert Orr; Mrs. William Hardison; Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Smith; Dwight Smith; Mrs. Charles Law, Jr.; Bryant

Shelton; Mrs. Robert Lambert (nee Carol Shelton); Mr. and Mrs. James Fry, Jr.; Marie Yarborough; Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Johnson; Kenneth Johnson, Jr.; Mrs. Michael Andrews (nee Amy Lou Johnson); Debbie Clayton; Robin Harrelson; Ronnie Harrelson; Pam Hodges; Anthony Hodges; Martha Neal; Steve Page; Mr. John ("Bill") Apple; Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Jr.; Mrs. Rosa Hodges; Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Blackwell; Mrs. Henry Pettigrew, Jr.; Glenn Conrad; Walter Neal; Robert L. Neal, III; Ricky Smith; Mary Katherine Jones; Elizabeth Chambers; and Rosemary Hodges.

Concerning the giving records of the two churches since 1959; the Bethesda Church, stimulated by the challenge of a building fund, has averaged giving \$11,460 per year. (The total in 1964 was \$13,758). Gifts to benevolences since 1959 have averaged \$1,895; and building fund receipts since 1960 — the first year of such a fund — have averaged \$3,787. At the Yanceyville Church, total giving per year has averaged \$9,700, with an average of \$2,700 going to benevolences. The Yanceyville Church has not had a building fund in recent years.

PROPERTY ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The primary interest of the Bethesda Congregation in this area since 1959 has been the building of a manse, but there have been a few additions and improvements to existing property.

In late 1959, the road to the church was paved — a much needed improvement for which the congregation claims no credit since it was done by the State Highway Commission.

A second restroom was added to the educational building in 1962 with the use of Lord's Acre receipts from 1955. In 1963, the Women of the Church carpeted the vestibule, the steps, and hallway of the educational building. The Deacon's Bench in the hallway of the educational building was a gift of Mrs. D. W. Wright, Jr., in 1933. It was also in 1963 that Circle Four of the Women of the Church presented a robe to the church for the use of the minister. New hymnals were presented to the choir by Mr. and Mrs. David Neal in 1963.

The two lovely oil pictures which hang in the vestibule today were painted by Miss Cora Harralson, based on originals by Artist Warner Sallman. "Christ at Door" was presented to the church in honor of her brother, Preston Harralson, on Feb. 24, 1963. "The Good Shepherd" was dedicated in loving memory of Miss Bessie Wright on June 27, 1965. "The Head of Christ" hanging in the hallway of the educational building was also drawn by Miss Harralson from an original by Sallman.

Mention has already been made of the lengthy services of Miss Bessie Wright as the treasurer of the Sunday School and church; but mention should also be made of her services in preparing the elements of the Communion Service for more years than any can remember. Following her resignation in early 1964, the session took the following action: "Resolved, that the Session of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church express sincere appreciation on behalf of the entire congregation to Miss Bessie Wright for her faithfulness for more than forty years in handling arrangements for the Communion Service in such an attractive, orderly and dependable manner." Elected by the session to succeed Miss Wright in this service was Mrs. Leona Lillard.

In April, 1962, a beautiful set of Carillonic Bells were presented to the church by the D. W. Wirght, Sr., family in loving memory of Mr. Wright. The plaque in the vestibule associated with this gift bears the following inscription:

**“THE CARILLONIC BELLS
in this church
are dedicated
TO THE GLORY OF GOD
o—o—o—o—o—o**

**In Loving Memory of
DAVID WILSON WRIGHT
By His
Wife and Children
Easter, 1962”**

At the time these bells were dedicated, the pastor read the following resolution adopted earlier by the session:

DAVID W. WRIGHT, SR.

“Whereas our Heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom has called unto Himself our beloved friend and fellow elder, David W. Wright, Sr., who departed this life, July 4, 1961; and

“Whereas we have lost a wise and consecrated member of the session; and

“Whereas his life, his character, and his devotion to God, his church, his family, his community, and his nation are a source of inspiration to us and worthy of the highest tribute and recognition; and

“Whereas, we desire to convey to the members of his bereaved family our deepest sympathy;

“Now therefore be it resolved: that it be recorded in our minutes as follows: David W. Wright, Sr., was born on February 28, 1893, the son of David L. and Sallie Cobb Wright. He became a member of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church in 1909, was elected a deacon in 1915, and became an elder in 1925. For twenty-six years he served as Clerk of the Session. In the 1940's he served as Chairman of the Building Committee which led the congregation in the erection of a beautiful and spacious church plant. For a number of years he was a valuable member of the Board of Trustees of Flora Macdonald College. He loved his church and was a devoted and generous supporter of all its causes.

“Be it further resolved: that we extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Wright and other members of the family; that this resolution be recorded in the minutes of the session; and that a copy be sent to the Christian Observer for publication.”

A GOAL IS ADOPTED FOR 1965

On May 22, 1960, a congregational meeting of historic importance was held at Bethesda to vote on a recommendation of the officers that the congregation reactivate the Lord's Acre Program with a view to building a manse and calling a full-time minister in 1965, the church's bi-centennial. The congregation voted unanimously in favor of the recommendation; and since that time, the entire membership has been working enthusiastically towards that goal.

The idea of calling a full-time minister in 1965 was first discussed officially at a meeting of the Board of Deacons on May 1, 1960. With the church in need of a challenging goal for its bi-centennial year and with Mr. Lytch in agreement with the former pastors that Bethesda needed a full-time minister, this goal had much to commend itself; and the deacons gave their wholehearted endorsement to it. On May 10, 1960, the session placed its stamp of approval upon the goal and called the congregational meeting already mentioned.

On June 2, 1963, the session voted in favor of delaying efforts to call a full-time minister until after June of 1965, in order that Mr. Lytch might be in a position to see the church through the celebration of its bi-centennial.

PLANNING FOR THE MANSE

On September 27, 1961, the session approved the organization of a Manse Committee consisting of representatives from various groups within the church. After these groups had elected their representatives, the original committee was comprised of the following: D. W. Wright, Jr., session; J. D. Foster, deacons; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr., women of the church; Marie Yarborough, young people; and Sammy Strader, congregation-at-large. Named as chairman was D. W. Wright, Jr. Miss Yarborough later moved from the community and was never active on the committee. On March 10, 1964, the session recommended the addition of another woman to the committee, to come from the Sunday school, and Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr. was later chosen by the Sunday school.

The location of the manse was a matter of vital interest to the congregation, and the decision to build on the present lot was reached only after much discussion at a congregational meeting on May 26, 1963. The Manse Committee recommended the acceptance of a lot near Quick offered to the church without cost by Mrs. Dora Lillard, but the majority of the congregation voted in favor of the present lot because it was nearer the church. (Realizing that many of the members preferred a lot near the church, the Manse Committee made arrangements in advance of the congregational meeting to secure the present lot in the event the committee's recommendation was rejected.) The lot chosen is about one mile from the church and measures one acre. Better than half of this lot was given to the church by Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Foster in loving memory of their daughter, Frances Lea; and the remainder was bought from Mr. Harrelson Foster for \$450.

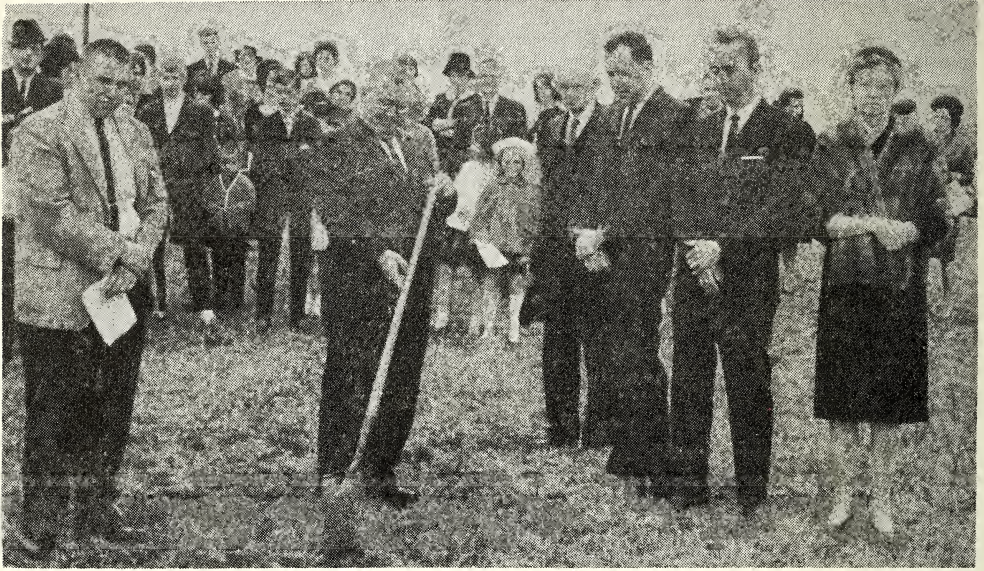
On August 27, 1963, the session took note of the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Foster and passed the following resolution:

"Resolved, that the Session of the Bethesda Church express sincere appreciation on behalf of the entire congregation to Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Foster for the generous gift of .55 acres of land to be used as part of the lot for the erection of the manse."

After considerable study and investigation, the Manse Committee voted in favor of recommending to the Bethesda Congregation for its approval the plans used by the Morningside Presbyterian Church of Sanford, N. C., in constructing its manse. This house was designed specifically as a manse with a study by Mr. John W. Freemann, Jr., of Sanford. On March 20, 1965, the Bethesda Congregation approved the building of this house at a base bid of \$24,000. A few days later the contract was let to Mr. John Carter, an associate of Hudson and Lester Building Supply Co. of Reidsville. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the manse were held on Sunday, April 4, 1965, and actual construction began the following week.

The manse itself is a brick veneer structure consisting of three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, den, two baths, a most conveniently located study with an outside entrance, a full basement, and a car port. The large front porch is graced by six large columns.

GROUNDBREAKING FOR BETHESDA MANSE



THE MANSE BUILDING FUND

As the time construction began on the manse the total in the building fund was slightly in excess of \$16,000, not including the \$5,000 anticipated from sale of Bethesda's equity in the old manse to the Yanceyville Church. (This sale was confirmed on May 9, 1965, when the Yanceyville Congregation voted to pay this amount to Bethesda.) The Bethesda officers have often pointed out to the congregation the need to have the manse paid for in full at the time of completion if the church was to be able to meet the increased cost involved in calling a full-time minister. The officers have also expressed the hope that the church will be able to call a full-time minister without reducing the level of its giving to budgeted benevolences.

Building fund receipts since 1960, the first year of the fund, have averaged \$3,787 per year; the receipts coming from Lord's Acre projects and all money in the church treasury over \$1,000 at the end of each year. Lord's Acre receipts for these years have been as follows: 1960, \$1,200.95; 1961, \$1,416.52; 1962, \$1,584.35; 1963, \$1,996.35; and 1964, \$2,617.94.

Almost all of the building fund receipts through 1964 came from members of the congregation; and only since the beginning of 1965, has any effort been made to secure funds from outside sources. In 1965, a number of contributions have been received from outside sources: these include \$300 from Mrs. Bert Bennett, Sr., of Winston-Salem, and \$200 from the Belk Foundation, Charlotte.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Several steps have been taken at Bethesda since 1959 to strengthen the church's work in the area of Christian Education. On August 2, 1959, the session authorized the organization of a Christian Education Committee, and named to serve on this committee were these: Elwood Clayton, chm.; D. W. Wright, Jr.; Mrs. C. J. Law, Sr.; Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr.; and James Blackwell, Jr. Named as advisory members were the Sunday school superintendent and the pastor.

October, 1963, marked the beginning of the use of the Covenant Life Curricu-

lum at Bethesda. A new curriculum developed by the Board of Christian Education, Richmond, Va., the materials for adults were the first to become available. The Youth of the Church, grades 7-12, began use of the materials in October, 1964; and it is expected that the children's departments will begin use of this curriculum in October, 1965.

Another effort to strengthen the church's work in the area of Christian Education since 1959 has been the enlargement of the church library. Several dozen volumes have been added since that time, and the Sunday school budget now carries \$50 per year as a regular item for the purchase of books. The present librarian is Miss Mary Lily Watlington.

ROTARY SYSTEM FOR BOARD OF DEACONS

The ordination of deacons and ruling elders is ordinarily valid for life, but a local congregation has the right to limit the terms of active service of its officers; and many congregations exercise this right by installing what is popularly called "The Rotary System" for its deacons and/or elders. On Feb. 5, 1961, the Bethesda Congregation upon recommendation of the session, voted to limit the terms of service of the members of the board of deacons. The congregation made certain amendments to the system on Dec. 27, 1964, and the provisions of the system at present are as follows:

(1) That the board be comprised of nine men, divided into three classes, with three men in each class.

(2) That elections be for six year terms, except to fill vacancies. (In order to put the system into operation, the original classes were for seven, five and three year terms.)

(3) That a person be ineligible for re-election for a period of two years, except to fill vacancies.

(4) That elections be held every two years in February, except to fill vacancies. Based on the vote of the congregation, elections to the original classes were as follows: 1964, Richard Page, David Neal and W. J. Jones; 1966, Sam Hudson, Hugh C. Wright, and Van Daniel, Jr. (After the resignation of Van Daniel, Jr., in Jan. 1964, Richard Page was elected to fill his unexpired term.); 1968, J. D. Foster, Douglas Harrelson and J. Y. Blackwell, Jr. In Feb. of 1964, the congregation elected three men to the Class of 1970 to replace the Class of 1964. They were William I. Reagan, Albert Edward Lillard, and W. H. Hatchett, Jr.

In choosing the first set of deacons under the rotary system the congregation voted on its officers for the first time in memory without prior nominations from the session, and all elections since that time have been conducted in this way.

CALLING OF A FULL-TIME MINISTER

The goal towards which Bethesda has been moving since that historic congregational meeting on May 22, 1960, was realized on May 23, 1965, when the congregation voted in favor of amending the terms of Mr. Lytch's call in order that he might give his full-time as pastor of the Bethesda Congregation. Following this action, Mr. Lytch indicated his acceptance of the terms; and it is expected that he will begin his work as full-time pastor on Sept. 1, 1965, or whenever the Yanceyville Church calls a minister — whichever comes first.

BI-CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Exciting plans have been made for the observance of the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Bethesda Church; and the committee responsible for making these plans has the following membership: W. H. Hatchett, Jr., General Chm.; Miss Hester Womack, Chm. of Records and History; Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr.,

Chm. of Arrangements; Mrs. R. B. Chance, Chm. of Publicity; and the pastor as an advisory member.

The bi-centennial celebration will center in the week of June 27-July 2, 1965. Sunday, June 27, will be observed as Homecoming Sunday, with the Rev. Roy Whitley as the guest preacher at the 11 a.m. service. Dinner on the grounds will follow at 1 p.m.; and at 2:30 p.m. an Historical Service will be held, with Dr. Harold Dudley, Executive Sec. of the Synod of N. C., as the visiting speaker. Other features of the Historical Service will be the reading of the church history, the recognition of visitors from churches founded by Bethesda pastors, and the honoring of persons who have been members of Bethesda for more than fifty years. Special worship services will be held on Monday through Friday nights, June 28-July 2, and the sermons will be delivered by former pastors. Mr. Whitley will speak on Monday night, the Rev. Herman Womeldorf on Tues. and Wed. nights, and the Rev. Cecil Callis on Thurs. and Fri. nights. On Sunday morning, July 4, at 11 a.m., a service of dedication to a new era of service will be led by Mr. Lytch.

Another event in Bethesda's observance of its bi-centennial will be the entertaining of Orange Presbytery on July 15, 1965, for its 399th Stated Session.

DEACONS ORDAINED FROM 1959 TO 1964

Hugh C. Wright, ordained March 5, 1961.

Richard Page, ordained March 5, 1961.

W. H. Hatchett, Jr., ordained March 22, 1964.

Albert Edward Lillard, ordained March 22, 1964.

William Irvin Reagan, ordained March 22, 1964.

ELDERS ORDAINED FROM 1959 TO 1964

Hurley Stanley, ordained August 14, 1960.

D. W. Wright, Jr., ordained August 14, 1960.

Charles Law, Jr., ordained August 14, 1960; transferred to Wilson, N. C., October, 1962.

TRUSTEES ELECTED ON MARCH 15, 1959

R. L. Neal, Sr.; Elwood Clayton; David Wright, Jr.; and W. H. Hatchett, Jr.

CONCLUSION

At the meeting of a Rotary Club the president recognized the head of a business that was celebrating its one-hundredth anniversary. "A Century is a long time," said the president, "only an organization rendering great service could endure so long". And then he asked, "Do we have an older organization represented in our club". If a member of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church had been present at this meeting he could have stood up and said, "Yes, I represent an organization that is two-hundred years old — an organization that has endured because it is of God and has been faithful in its service to mankind".

In the past two hundred years, the Bethesda Church has rendered a noble service not only in the community where it is found but also in many distant places. This has been done not only through its gifts of money, but more especially through the raising up of dedicated young people who went out to settle in other communities, where they were faithful in living for Christ and His Church. One of the most effective witnesses ever to go out from Bethesda was Mrs. J. Edmund Foster (nee Elizabeth Neal). A man well-acquainted with her influence, Dr. R. H. Stone, tells her story in the following words:

"While others of the Bethesda community were troubled and deeply concerned about the problems that were soon to divide the nation Elder Stephen Neal and his

wife Mrs. Adelaide Turner Neal were rejoicing in the birth of a daughter — Elizabeth. During the years of her schooling she prepared herself to teach school. God in His providence led her to teach in Winston-Salem. His leading again brought her to know Major J. Edmund Foster — a merchant prince of Ashe County with home and businesses in Jefferson. On June 3, 1896, they were married; and this daughter of Bethesda as a bride was the only Presbyterian in the county.

“Major Foster was a Methodist and he invited his bride to unite with his church. She replied that she was a blue stocking Presbyterian and that the faith of her fathers suited her very well. From her front porch she could see an ugly piece of masonry — the county jail. Diagonally across the street in the line of vision to the jail was a vacant lot. Mrs. Foster spoke of that as her ‘dream lot.’ She began to pray that on that lot there would someday be a Presbyterian Church. It wasn’t a case of faith without works. En route by train from Winston-Salem to North Wilkesboro she saw Rev. Charles W. Robinson, pastor of the Elkin and Wilkes County Presbyterian Churches, whom she invited to come over the mountains and preach. The invitation was accepted and the minister sensed the need and saw the opportunity for Orange Presbytery to begin a Mission work in Ashe County. At the first opportunity he reported his visit and vision to the Presbytery. His address proved that he was a good salesman. The Presbytery took the initiative; and Dr. E. W. Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, took the lead and asked his congregation to undertake the cost. He, too, was a good salesman and there was a prompt response.

“The result was that about 1897, the Rev. Eugene E. Gillespie, a recent graduate of Union Seminary, mounted his horse and rode the hundred and twenty-five miles to Jefferson and reported to Mrs. Foster. It was a glad day for her to know that her prayer was being answered. In 1898 under the wonderful leadership of Mr. Gillespie the Ebenezer Church was organized. He preached in a number of other places and laid the foundation for the organization of the Jefferson Church in 1900; the Obids Church in 1909; and the Peak Creek Church in 1922. These churches and their ministers had a sense of mission and evangelism and to these were added the West Jefferson, the Lansing, and the Foster Memorial Churches. The Foster Memorial Church has in it a lovely art-glass window; and on a plate underneath the window are these words: ‘Dedicated to the glory of God in loving memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Neal Foster, the Mother of Presbyterianism in Ashe County’.

“These churches through which many souls have been saved, hundreds built up in the holy faith, many Christian homes established, are the result of the working, praying faith of Bethesda’s contribution to Home Missions in Ashe County”.

The present members of Bethesda can be justly proud that this church has been in existence for two hundred years and that throughout these years it has sought to serve God and man; but an honest evaluation of the past compels us to admit that there is room and need for improvement in the church’s service to God as it looks to the future. Following the meeting of Presbytery at Bethesda on October 18, 1927, the Rev. R. Murphy Williams, Chairman of the Courtesy Committee, wrote some words with which all can agree:

“The Presbytery feels that this is sacred ground hallowed by the memory of such men as William B. Meroney, John H. Pickard, and Jacob Doll, whose bodies lie in the graveyard around the church . . . Notwithstanding the age of this church, we feel that its most useful days are yet before it. We pray God’s richest blessings upon this body of the Lord’s people”.

There are two areas in particular, it would seem, where Bethesda needs to strengthen its witness and work. The first area is that of evangelism. The church reported a membership of only 157 at the end of 1964, which means that in the two hundred years of its existence it has succeeded in showing a net gain, on the average, of less than one member per year. The second area in need of strengthening is that of appealing to its young people to enter full-time church vocations. Apart from Jams P. Wilkins who may have entered the Baptist ministry after his discharge from the Navy no young person from Bethesda has ever entered a full-time church vocation. Happily, however, one of Bethesda's daughters, Mrs. O. W. Manuel (nee Mary Scott Blackwell), is associated with a full-time church vocation in that she is married to a Presbyterian minister.

The Bethesda Church has accomplished much good in its two hundred years of existence — and to God we give the praise; but there is much room for improvement in its work and witness — and to God we look for guidance and strength.

When the Children of Israel returned to their homeland from the Babylonian Captivity, they found the temple in ruins and the land in poverty; and they were sorely tempted to throw up their hands in despair. But God provided inspiration and encouragement through one of His prophets by saying, "The latter splendor shall be greater than the former . . . and in this place I will give prosperity". Haggai 2:9.

God grant that the entire membership of the Bethesda Church both in the present and in the future may be so committed to Him and His purposes that He may indeed give "spiritual prosperity" to the Bethesda Church in the years that are to come.

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand
"Thy people still are fed,
"Who through this weary pilgrimage
"Hast all our fathers led.
"Our vows, our prayers we now present
"Before Thy throne of Grace.
"God of our fathers, be the God
"Of their succeeding race."

**PRESENT ROLL OF THE CHURCH AND
WHEN EACH MEMBER JOINED**

Mrs. Michael Andrews, 3-25-62; John ("Bill") Apple, 6-27-63; Mrs. John Apple, 7-24-55; Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Blackwell, 3-10-64; J. Y. Blackwell, Sr., 10-17-02; J. Y. Blackwell, Jr., 11-4th Sun.-38; Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Jr., 8-27-63; Mrs. Ollie Blackwell, 10-28-17; Reid Blackwell, 8-25-12; Mrs. Reid Blackwell, 2-22-42; Mrs. Mary Frances Brame, 7-11-42; Elizabeth Chambers, 6-28-64; R. B. Chance, 2-24-52; Mrs. R. B. Chance, 10-2nd Sun.-24; Robert E. Chance, 3-27-38; Bailey Chance, 10-20-50; Harvey Chaney, Jr., 1-14-51; Mrs. Harvey Chaney, 5-9-37; Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Clayton, 9-26-43; Debbie Clayton, 8-5-62; Glenn Conrad, 6-28-64; Mrs. Glenn Conrad, 7-11-48; Mrs. Van Daniel, Sr., 1913; Van Daniel, Jr., 10-2-31; Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr., 10-22-50; Van W. Daniel, III, 7-24-55; David Doyle, 4-28-57; Mrs. David Doyle, 5-4th Sun.-45; J. D. Foster, 6-29-47; Mrs. J. D. Foster, 7-1-56; J. L. Foster, 8-24-58; Mrs. J. L. Foster, 7-11-48; Mrs. Jimmy Griffin, 4-3-60; Mrs. Marjorie Handy, 6-30-46; Mrs. William Hardison, 5-28-44 and 7-18-60; Douglas Harrelson, 9-26-43; Mrs. Douglas Harrelson, 11-12-56; Ronnie and Robin Harrelson, 8-5-62; Mrs. I. L. Harrelson, May (?), 56; Mrs. Jamie Harrelson, 2-25-45; Malcolm Harrelson, 6-29-47; Mrs. Mary Lou Harrelson, 6-29-47; Thad Harrelson, 6-30-46; Mrs. Thad Harrelson, 7-22-56; Turner Harrelson, Jr., 4-3-60; Mrs. Turner Harrelson, Jr., 10-28-62; H. T. Harrelson, Sr., 8-24-58; Mrs. H. T. Harrelson, Sr., 6-29-47; P. B. Harrelson, 10-2nd Sun.-26; Miss Cora Harralson, 1915; Mrs. Henry Harrelson, 10-18-17; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Sr., 6-29-47; W. H. Hatchett, Jr., 6-29-47; Mrs. W. H. Hatchett, Jr., 7-6-58; Earl Hodges, 11-6-49; Mrs. Earl Hodges, 7-22-56; Mr. and Mrs. Fielding Hodges, 7-24-55; Anthony Hodges, 8-5-62; Mrs. Rosa Hodges, 1-26-64; Rosemary Hodges, 7-5-64; Kenneth Hodges, 11-6-55; Mrs. Kenneth Hodges, 6-30-46; Pam Hodges, 8-5-62; Mr. and Mrs. William Hodges, 8-24-58; Sam J. Hudson, 5-9-37; Mrs. Sam J. Hudson, 7-11-48; Mrs. Kenneth Johnson, 9-29-27 and 3-25-62; Ken Johnson, 3-25-62; Mary Katherine Jones, 6-28-64; John Jones, 10-22-39; Mrs. John Jones, 8-2-30; Mrs. Lema Jones, 9-16-53; Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Jones, 11-6-49; Joseph Jones, 10-22-50; Mrs. Robert Lambert, 6-4-61; C. J. Law, Sr., 7-30-08; Mrs. C. J. Law, Sr., about 1929; Edward Law, 6-23-46; Elenor Law, 7-28-14; Francis Law, 12-20-20; Mrs. Francis Law, 10-1-42; Mary Carolyn Law, 7-4-54; Albert Edward Lillard, 7-7-46; Mrs. Albert Edward Lillard, 1955; Mrs. Leona Lillard, 6-30-46; Billy Loflin, 10-22-50; Mrs. Billy Loflin, 11-1-59; Mrs. W. E. Lytch, 5-24-59; Mrs. O. W. Manuel, 6-23-46; David Neal, 6-4th Sun.-33 and 7-13-52; Mrs. David Neal, 7-13-52; Martha Neal, 8-5-62; R. L. Neal, Sr., 10-25-96; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Sr., 3-28-15; Miss Rebecca Neal, 10-25-96; R. L. Neal, Jr., 8-2-30; Mrs. R. L. Neal, Jr., 2-22-48; Becky Neal, 4-3-60; Walter Neal, 6-28-64; Robert L. Neal, III, 6-28-64; Mrs. Beulah Neighbors, 8-25-12; Miss Ida Neighbors, 8-16-93; Mrs. Donald Orr, 7-16-53; Robert Orr, 4-3-60; Mrs. Eugene Orr, 12-22-12; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Page, 9-4-55; Judy Page, 4-3-60; Edward Page, 4-3-60; Steve Page, 8-5-62; Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pettigrew, Sr., 6-3-56; Henry Pettigrew, Jr., 6-3-56; Mrs. Henry Pettigrew, Jr., 6-28-64; William I. Reagan, 4-9-44; Mrs. William I. Reagan, 6-29-64; Ellen Rice, 7-16-53; Virginia Rice, 7-4-54; Mr. and Mrs. Clem Shelton, 10-22-50; Jerry Shelton, 1-14-51; Bryant Shelton, 6-4-61; Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Smith, 6-4-61; Mrs. John F. Smith, 7-16-53; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Smith, 7-22-56; Dwight Smith, 6-4-61; Ricky Smith, 6-28-64; Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Strader, 10-22-50; Hurley Stanley, 10-2nd Sun.-24; Mrs. Hurley Stanley, 7-22-16; Mrs. Bertha Stanley, 10-2nd Sun.-24; Mrs. John Stillman, III, 7-4-54; Mary Lily Watlington, 8-2-59; Miss Hester Womack, 9-18-09; Miss Edna Womack, 9-27-08; Miss Willie Womack, 8-25-12; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Sr., about 1925; D. W. Wright, Jr., 10-22-39; Mrs. D. W. Wright, Jr., 7-28-57; Hugh C. Wright, 10-22-39; and Mrs. Hugh C. Wright, 11-1-59.

PRESENT OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

SESSION:

W. E. Lytch, Moderator
Elwood Clayton, Clerk
J. Y. Blackwell, Sr.
P. B. Harralson
C. J. Law, Sr.
M. F. Law
R. L. Neal, Sr.
David W. Wright, Jr.
Hurley Stanley

BOARD OF DEACONS:

Class of 1970: Albert Edward Lillard; William Irvin Reagan; and W. H. Hatchett, Jr.

Class of 1968: J. Y. Blackwell, Jr.; J. D. Foster; and Douglas Harrelson, Chairman.

Class of 1966: Sam Hudson, Hugh C. Wright, and Richard Page.

OTHERS:

Mrs. J. Y. Blackwell, Jr. — President of the Women of the Church.

David Neal, Sunday School Superintendent.

BI-CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

W. H. Hatchett, Jr., General Chairman.
Mrs. Van Daniel, Jr., Chm. of Arrangements.
Mrs. R. B. Chance, Chm. of Publicity.
Miss Hester Womack, Chm. of Historical Records.
W. E. Lytch, Advisory Member.

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