Just before the turn of the century the section of the county now known as the Bethany Community was the backwoods section of the county. It was unchurched, unschooled and uncleared largely and consequently sheltered much evil in its wilderness. During the year of 1897 several families moved from South Carolina into the community. Among these was Brother J. D. Brown and his family. They had been accustomed to regular Sunday School attendance and to work in the church. They found no church in this section so Brother Brown interested some of the neighbors in the establishment of a Sunday School class. He acted as Superintendent and the class met regularly in an old log school building just back of the present school building.

The little Sunday School began to grow rapidly and some of the good people of the Pine Grove Church became interested in the new venture. They offered assistance and also asked their pastor, the Rev. B. G. Dunagin, to give the little Sunday School congregation an appointment one Sunday afternoon each month. He willingly did so until his death.

Brother J. G. Davis and Brother W. S. Gaines then came into the county as pastor and junior pastor of the Methodist churches. They continued to serve the little Sunday School as Brother Dunagin had. The people asked them to run a meeting in the late summer of 1898. A brush arbor was erected and attached to the front of the log school house. The meeting brought the people of the community together and much interest was manifested. No additions were made during the course of the meeting but a survey was continued following its close and many Methodists were found living in the community. Twenty-four persons who were members of Methodist churches elsewhere or of Methodist families were brought together and a Methodist church was organized in September 1898 with these twenty-four persons as Charter Members. These Christian men and women were: Thomas T; William A; Edward H; G. Edgar; S. Adeline; Nina; and Hattie L. Albea, Joseph D. and Joseph M. Brown, John F. Brown, Jesse M. Brown, William R. and Sara L. Barrett, Emmie Banks, Effie G. Burgett, Hattie A. Ivey, Joshua H. and Bessie Martin, Mabel Martin, Francis M. Tullis, Henry W. and Sara J. Weeks, Henry E. and Alice White. Nine of these Charter Members are still living today.

Brother A. J. Sears came as the pastor in the fall of 1898. The following spring the church was erected. Mr. J. C. Tullis donated a three acre tract of land which is still the property of the church and furnished a lovely oak grove as a setting for the new church. The building was erected with very little expenditure of cash. All the lumber was donated by the people in the community, a saw mill was rented and the people of the church and community came together and did all the work, donating their labor. Brother Benj. Ivey (who did not become a member until 1907) served as chairman of the building committee.

A name had to be chosen for the new church. Many of the people wanted to name it Davis' Chapel for the pastor under whose administration it was erected. Brother Davis advised against the name, especially since there were already several "chapels" in the county, so he suggested Bethany as a good name. The people liked Bethany so they all agreed to it as the name for their new church.
Many who were not listed among the charter members worked on the
church or contributed to its completion, including the colored people.
The chancel rail was handmade by Brother J. S. Willingham, the pulpit
was made and donated by Brother Chick Harris, and the present benches
were handmade by Brother Wade Ivey and Brother Bidgon Ttiner. The ben­
ches were added at a later date to replace the crude plank benches with
no backs that were origionally used for some time.

In the year 1899 a dedication service was conducted by Brother
Quillian, then the presiding elder of the Elberton District. At the time
of the dedication the inside of the church was not sealed but the follow­
ing year $30 was received from the General Board of Church Extension and
materials were purchased to seal the inside of the church. During the
ministry of Rev. W. F. Walden, the two front doors were converted into
windows and a center entrance, the porch and concrete steps added. Thru
the years three different roofs have been required to weather the storms.
The first roof was of hand drawn shingles and lasted thirty years. An
interesting event in the history of the church was the second "house
covering" which took place around Christmas time 1929. All the men of
the church came one morning to cover the church. The colored folks in
the community heard the ladies were going to bring a big dinner around
noon time so they hurried along to help. By dinner time the roof was
completed, the ladies had the big dinner ready for the men folks and
while they ate the colored brethren cleaned up the grounds, then they
shared in the big dinner and everyone had a great time together.

Throughout its history Bethany Church has enjoyed a wonderful spirit
of cooperation and has known some faithful and consecrated workers. It
started out as a Sunday School and has always had a good Sunday School.
At present there are 82 on roll in the Sunday School and recently there
were 92 present one Sunday morning. A few weeks ago fifty-six children
were enrolled in a week of Vacation Bible School. Brother J. D. Brown
was the first Sunday School Superintendent, serving even before the org­
anization of the church. In the fall of 1899 Brother J. M. Ivey became
Superintendent, and served until the fall of 1911 with the exception of
the year 1907. A young man in the church, G. Edgar Albea, supplied for
that one year. In 1911 Brother Albea was made the Sunday School Super­
intendent and has served faithfully for thirty-seven years. These have
been consecutivo years of service except for the year 1923-24 when
Brother L. P. Teasley served for a term of one year. Much credit is due
Brother Edgar Albea for his faithfulness to Bethany Church, for his un­
tiring service and for the great influence of his Christian life in the
church and community. He has not only been a "pillar of the church" but
a "builder of the church and of Christian character".

There has been a steady and constant addition of new members thru
the fifty years of Bethany's history. Many have gone out from its mem­
ership to fill places of leadership in other churches of various den­
onimations. The net increase in membership during this half-centu­
y has been one-hundred-thirty-four. From the very beginning the church
has been a source of inspiration to all in the community and the quality
of life has continually improved until now Bethany community is regarded
one of the most desirable sections of the entire county to live in. The
Christian people of Bethany have constructed two school buildings upon
their Church property, one building was destroyed by fire, but the school
became the first standard school in the county.

To Jesus, Bethany was the homeplace of Mary and Martha where he
loved to go for rest, inspiration and fellowship. To all tho go to Beth­
any Methodist Church in Lincoln County, Georgia, likewise, it means rest,
inspiration and Christian fellowship.