

## HISTORY OF MT. BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Cobb County was settled during the early 1830's, shortly after this area, formerly Indian land, was opened up to white settlers. Mt. Bethel was one of the early churches and was organized about 1840 with thirteen charter members. Walter Manning was the first pastor. The church was called Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church and was located on the north side of Lower Roswell Road about one-half mile east of Johnson's Ferry Road. The cemetery of this church may still be seen just off Richmond Hill Drive.

Then, in the late 1870's, John Hays donated two acres at the intersection of Johnson's Ferry and Lower Roswell Roads, and a new church was built there with timber donated by Pikney J. Power. When this church burned, a new church was built and called Mt. Bethel.

Until 1951, Mt. Bethel remained a one-room church. At that time, three Sunday-School rooms and a front stoop were added. By 1956, three more classrooms and a hall were added, and in 1965, two more classrooms.

For many years, Mt. Bethel was served by a pastor on circuit. First on the Cobb Charge, Mt. Bethel later was on the East Cobb Charge, and in 1888, it became part of the Cobb Circuit. It remained on that circuit until 1961, when it became part of the Marietta Circuit.

During those years of relatively slow growth, Mt. Bethel's membership remained active. The women of the church were strong contributors to church life. The first Women's Missionary Society was organized with Mrs. L. M. Power as president; it was reorganized in 1933 with Mrs. W. P. Rowe as president. In 1940, the name was changed to the Women's Society of Christian Service. By 1950, the society had been discontinued but was revived in that year with Mrs. Ola Jones as president.

The youth, too, played its part in the life of the church. An Epworth League was organized in the 1930's and later grew into the Methodist Youth Fellowship. The first vacation church school was held in August, 1950.

In July, 1966, the church bought a parsonage and moved that house onto a site donated by A. E. Eavenson. This parsonage was rented until 1967 when the first full-time pastor, Larry W. Rary, moved in.

By 1969, the East Cobb area had begun its phenomenal growth, and that year eight acres of land was purchased on Lower Roswell Road. By 1971, membership of the church had reached 155, and it was evident that the church would have to expand. Therefore, payment for the land was completed January 24, 1971, and a ground-breaking ceremony was held in July of that same year on the new acreage owned by the church.

The church was moved from its old location at the intersection, where the church cemetery is still located, to the new site about a mile west on Lower Roswell. The move took place in September of 1971, at which the old building was renovated and a new fellowship hall added.. A special service of consecration was held on February 13, 1972.

Membership continued to grow rapidly, however, and groundbreaking for a new sanctuary was begun on April 11, 1976, when William B. Springer was pastor.

In June of 1977, the present pastor, John Moler, came to Mt. Bethel. Under his leadership, the church continued to grow and, as of October, 1977, had 447 active members.

All the church organizations remain active. In 1972, the women's society became the United Methodist Women during the presidency fo Mrs. Don Hipps and since that time has grown into an organization with four circles. The United Methodist Men sponsor a number of projects and meet monthly for Sunday breakfast. The church sponsors

Boy Scout Troop 1011, and the youth program has expanded under the new minister to youth, Joe Reiff. His wife, Betty Reiff, is minister to children.

Several families have remained active and meant much to church life in Mt. Bethel for many years. Some of the family names which appear in old records include the following: Power, Bowen, McClain, Summerour, Lewis, McGarity, Harper, Eavenson, Bellah, Wilson, McCleskey, Jones, Westbrook, Conn, Dickerson, Cagle, Merritt, and Gaddis.

Among these families, perhaps the family of Arthur Wilson is best known. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson are among our oldest members, and a Sunday-School class has been named in Mr. Wilson's honor. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, Dorothy Summerour, is indeed a "resident saint", as Rev. Moler once described her. She has served in every capacity--from Sunday-School teacher to U. M. W. President to volunteer caretaker for the Mt. Bethel cemetery. She has also contributed a son to the ministry, Larry Summerour.

The church staff in June, 1978 included: John Moler, minister; Joe Reiff, minister to youth; Betty Reiff, minister to children; Mary Lou Ellis, choir director; Lee Zinzow, organist; Janet Battin, Donald Dodd, and Dorothy Ball, pianists; John Moler, Jr., liturgist; and Gail Jefferson, church secretary.

God has blessed Mt. Bethel in its 138 years of growth. Its our prayer that Mt. Bethel will continue to grow and prosper in God's service.

July, 1978

# PASTORS WHO SERVED MT. BETHEL

1870 Walter Manning	1911 J. B. Gresham	1956 Hugh M. Grubb
1879 A. W. Roland	1913 W. H. Greer	1959 Robert H. Fox, Jr.
1880 M. W. Arnold	1915 J. M. Crowe	1960 S. N. McCord
1882 J. W. Baker	1918 G. T. Shell	Kenneth Hult, Assoc.
1884 O. B. Quilleen	1919 G. A. Chambers	1961 Lewis Pope
1885 H. M. Smith	1921 C. B. Drake	1963 W. H. Carmichael
1886 Supply	1923 N. A. Parson	J. E. Ward, Assoc.
1887 Jere Reese	1925 J. M. Perry	1964 Don Murphy
1888 J. D. Milton	1926 J. C. Hayden	1966 Michael Whitenton
1890 H. M. Strozier	1927 W. E. Tabb	1967 Larry W. Rary
1891 F. R. Smith	1928 J. L. Moore	1972 William B. Springer
1892 J. A. Burtz	1933 W. P. Rowe	1977 John Moler, Sr.
1893 T. A. Edwards	1935 J. L. Varner	
1894 D. C. Brown	1937 Jack Nichols	
1895 J. P. Burgess	1938 A. S. Ulm	
1896 T. W. Rogers	1939 J. S. Strickland	
1897 J. L. Ware	1941 B. A. Chastain	
1900 Supply	1943 Denny Hendry	
1901 J. A. Sprayberry	1946 R. T. Padgett	
1903 J. W. Hughes	W. C. Mason, Assoc.	
1904 L. D. Coggins	1948 N. C. Moss	
1905 J. R. Jones	1949 Henry Blount	
1907 A. E. Scott	1950 Sanford McDonald	
1908 W. A. Willis	1953 James N. Love	
1910 W. O. McMullan	1954 Paul T. Fry	
	1955 Jack Caldwell	