CHURCH HISTORY
1951

GRACEWOOD CIRCUIT
AUGUSTA, DISTRICT
NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE

PREPARED BY
CHARLES W. DAVIS, (L.D.)-PASTOR.
Sometime early in the years of 1800 there was a church located on Tobacco Road, in Gracewood, that was known as the Bethesda Church. All that remains today is the almost obliterated cemetery. No local history or knowledge of this church can be found. Who founded it, and when, must I fear remain lost.

Some years later for unknown reasons the church was moved some seven hundred yards west on Tobacco Road. (setting on or near the site of sheriff Guy Whittle’s present home). This was a thriving church in a fast growing community. Some of its pastor’s were, Rev. J.D. Milton, 1890–92; Rev. T.W. McClesky, 1893; Rev. P.R. Keathly, 1894; Rev. F.D. Cantrell, 1895–98; Rev. E.H. Wood, 1898–1901; Rev. J.H. Little, 1901–02; Rev. C.L. Pattillo, 1902–03; Rev. J.S. Embry, 1903–05; Rev. L.P. Winter, 1905–09; Rev. R.L. Whitehead, 1909–10, its last pastor. This church in 1909 was sold to the Parrish family, bodily moved a hundred yards to the highway now U.S.25. It was converted to a dwelling and today Mrs. Will H. Parrish continues to live there. The old rostrum is now a kitchen, a living room, dining room and bedroom have taken the place of the pews. Thus has passed the two old Bethesda Churches which Little is known, but is certain, rich in memories and romance of the silent past.

Going back is necessary in order to come up to date on Bethesda’s present history.
IN 1869 THE OLD "RICHMOND CAMP GROUND" WAS MOVED FROM BROTHERS VILLE (HEPHZIBAH) TO GRACE WOOD. HERE ON A TWENTY FIVE ACRE TRACT ON TOBACCO ROAD, BOUNDED BY THE SAVANNAH ROAD, BACK OF BETHESDA CHURCH, THE SPACIOUS TABERNACLE WAS ERECTED. YEAR BY YEAR AS IT BECAME ENDEARED IN THE LIVES OF THOSE FAR AND NEAR, "TENTS" SOON SURROUNDED THE TABERNACLE. AMONG SOME OF THESE "TENT HOLDERS" WERE, JAMES ANDERSON; AUGUSTUS H. ANDERSON; JAMES BRANDON; JOSEPH E. BURCH; CHARLES BURCH; SAMUEL B. CLARK; GEO. H. CRUMP; WILLIAM DOYLE; ROBERT EVANS; EDMUND B. GRESHAM; H.D. GREENWOOD; DR. WALTER E. JOHNSON; JESSE JOHNSON; JESSE KENT; ROBERT MALONE; HOLLAND METYEIRE; REV. NICKOLAS MURPHEY; ALEXANDER MURPHEY; HIRAM OSWALD; ABsOLUM RHODES; MIDDLETON SEAGO; MRS. NANCY SEAGO; JOSEPH THOMAS; EDMUND TABB; DAVID TINLEY; VALENTINE WALKER AND ASAPH WATERMAN.

ITS ANNUAL SERVICES WERE BLESSED BY THE LABORS OF THE FOLLOWING PREACHERS, REV. GEO. F. PIERCE; JAMES C. ANDREW; JOHN W. GLENN; THOMAS F. PIERCE; JOSIAH LEWIS; WM. M. CRUMLEY; JOHN W. KNIGHT; ALLEN TURNER; AND A HOST OF OTHERS.

GREAT MULTITUDES ANNUALLY LOOKED EAGERLY FORWARD TO "CAMP MEETIN'" WHERE THE GIRLS COULD WEAR THEIR NEW DRESSES AND MAYBE CATCH A BEAU: THE BOYS CAME BECAUSE THE SIGHT OF NEW STARCHED GINGHAM ALWAYS WILL DRAW THEM. THE OLD AND MORE SERIOUS FOLKS CAME
TO SING, SHOUT "GLORY TO GOD," AND FEAST ON THE POWERFUL, SINCERE PREACHING OF SOME OF METHODISM'S MOST CONSECRATED MINISTERS.

IN ITS LATTER YEARS THE FIRE AND ARDOR EBBED LOW. IN 1909 THE TABERNACLE WAS DISMANTLED, TENTS TORN DOWN, AND THE LAND REVERTED BACK TO THE ORIGINAL DONORS, THE HALL FAMILY OF GRACEWOOD. LIFE DIDN'T SEEM THE SAME TO THOSE WHO CHERISHED BLESSED MEMORIES OF CAMP MEETING DAYS.

IT WAS DURING THE SAME YEAR THAT ONE NIGHT AS MRS. LILLIE HALL WAS INSPIRED, WAKING HER HUSBAND SHE SAID, "GRACEWOOD NEEDS A NEW CHURCH, HOW MUCH WILL YOU GIVE?" MUTTERING SOMETHING ABOUT WOMEN WHO WAKE WORKING MEN OUT OF SOUND SLEEP WITH SUCH OUTLANDISH IDEA'S HE FINALLY PROMISED TO GIVE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS. ENCOURAGED BY THIS SHE CANVASSED EVERY ONE SHE KNEW, RECEIVING DONATIONS FROM ALL BUT A CERTAIN DOCTOR WHO FLATLY REFUSED. MR. HUGH ALEXANDER DONATED THE PRESENT TRIANGULAR PLOT AND THE PARSONAGE SITE TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. SOME TIME IN 1909 A BEAUTIFUL TWO STEEPLE CHURCH, COMPLETE WITH A BELL AND Sexton, WAS READY FOR SERVICE.

THE PASTORS OF NEW BETHESDA WERE, REV. R.L. WHITEHEAD; BEN T. MIZE; B.P. REED; W.S. GAINES; A.E. SILVEY; J.M. FOWLER; L.B. JONES, JR.

IN AUGUST 1923 LIGHTNING STRUCK AND SET FIRE TO THIS BUILDING, COMPLETELY DESTROYING IT. UNDER THE ABLE LEADERSHIP OF REV. L.B. JONES A NEW CHURCH WAS CONSTRUCTED AND COMMISSIONED IN 1924.
THAT BUILDING IS IN USE TODAY. THERE IS NOW
A PLAN AND A BUILDING FUND STARTED TO
ERECT A MODERN BRICK SANCTUARY SOME TIME
IN THE FUTURE. BETHESDA CHURCH HAS ALWAYS
BEEN BLESSED WITH CO-OPERATIVE PEOPLE
WILLING, ABLE TO SERVE IN ANY CAPACITY.
THE OLDEST LIVING MEMBER IS MRS.
HERSEY, MOTHER OF MRS. KATIE B. BLUMKE. MRS. LILLIE
HALL, MR. AND MRS. GEO. H. SEAAGO, MRS. DEAS, MRS. W.M.
PARRISH ARE STILL WITH THE CHURCH TODAY.
THE PASTORS OF THIS LAST CHURCH
ARE REV'S., W.E. PURCELL; W.L. JOLLY; J.A. SPRAYBERRY;
J.C. CALLAWAY; W.T. WALDEN; T.L. RUTLAND; E.O. VICKERY;
E.P. EBANKS; LOYD JACKSON; GEO. E. CHAMBERS AND
CHARLES WESLEY DAVIS.
THE NAME "BETHESDA" HAS IN SOME CARELESS
WAY GIVEN OVER TO "GRACEWOOD." IT SHOULD EVER,
OUT OF RESPECT TO THE PAST BE KNOWN CORRECTLY
AS "BETHESDA CHURCH, METHODIST" OF GRACEWOOD
GA. GOD BLESS YOU OLD SOLDIER, THE WORLD
NEEDS WHAT YOU STAND FOR. MAY YOU EVER
BE A BETHESDA IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.

MAY, 1951.

BY
Charles W. Davis, L.P.
Pastor-Gracewood Circuit
The folk's out on the Deans Bridge Road (now U.S.1), eight miles from Augusta, felt the need of religious services in the community known as Murray Mill. Post-haste they erected a bush harbor. A great revival swept the coals of faith and fellowship together and a church was organized.

In 1843 Judge Edward Tabb contributed the timber to build a church. The logs were cut by negro slaves, floated across a pond (now known as Lombards Pond), and sawed into lumber at a sawmill known as Murray Mill. Judge Tabb erected the church with help of slaves on a acre of ground donated by George Davis, grandfather of Mrs. Edna Davis Rivers, the present day church treasurer. After its erection the church was known as "Murray Mill Church."

In 1854 the church was dedicated and renamed "Barton Chapel" in honor of Dr. Barton who was then serving as pastor. He was a sincere Christian, working all week and preaching on Sunday. Many other ministers have been privileged to labor here. Among its early members the Chavis and James families were the majority, and are still strongly represented.

The old building still stands, the ancient, weather scarred exterior now hidden by brick veneer; the old shingle roof replaced with gleaming metal. Except for recent painting
THE INTERIOR IS AS IT WAS WHEN IT WAS BUILT. THE SAME BENCHES ARE STILL IN ACTIVE USE.

DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS BARTON CHAPEL HASsteadily forged ahead, and today is an indispensable, endeared part of the expanding community. The enlargement of adjacent Camp Gordon, U.S. Military Center, disrupted the lives and membership of the church. But today it has the largest Sunday School in Gracewood Circuit, and still growing stronger every day, in every way. Just recently (1950) two Sunday School rooms have been added, two more are contemplated in the future.

The first wedding performed in this church was that of Gloria C. Walker, to, Joseph H. Skinner in 1950. They now are joint owners of their first male child.

May, 1951

By

Charles Wesley Davis, L.P.
Pastor, Gracewood Circuit
WALTER A. CLARK, NOTES IN HIS BOOK "ALOST ARCADIA" THAT BERLIN CHURCH WAS BUILT IN OR ABOUT 1830. THIS LOG BUILDING WAS ALSO USED AS A SCHOOL HOUSE. NO RECORDS ARE TO BE FOUND OF ITS EARLY ACTIVITY, UNTIL THE YEAR OF 1873. MRS. CARY C. COLLINS BASS, HAS SUPPLIED THE PRESENT HISTORY WHICH HER FATHER HAD HELPED PREPARE.

IN 1873 REV. B.F. FARRIS ORGANIZED BERLIN CHURCH IN A LITTLE LOG SCHOOL HOUSE NEAR WHERE THE CHURCH NOW STANDS. HE HAD AN APPOINTMENT THERE ONCE A MONTH, ABOUT ALL THE OLDER CITIZENS WERE MEMBERS OF OTHER CHURCHES IN THE COMMUNITY. AFTER AWHILE A BUSH HARBOR WAS BUILT FOR THE FIRST REVIVAL. REV. CARPENTER, A BAPTIST PREACHER ASSISTED IN THIS REVIVAL.

NOT LONG AFTERWARD, MESSRS., ROBERT ELLIOT, ABSOLUM NAPIER, JOHN MODESETTE, WILLIAM WALKER, HENRY BISHOP, JAMES DUNFORD, MR. BUCK, THOMAS ATKINS, HENRY DICKINSON, ALEXANDER WALKER, LEWIS COLLINS, AND MRS. ANN B. CLARK DECIDED TO CONSTRUCT A NEW CHURCH TO REPLACE THE LOG STRUCTURE. THE SCHOOL WAS MOVED TO A NEW BUILDING ONE MILE AWAY (THE PRESENT HOME OF HARLEY P. SHAW.) THOSE WHO DID NOT GIVE MONEY GAVE TIMBER. MR. HEZIKIA ATWELL DEALDED ONE ACRE OF LAND TO THE CHURCH. MR. JAMES BRANDON HAD HIS SAWMILL ON THE WALKER PLANTATION AND


DURING THE PASTORATE OF REV. B.F. MIZE THE CHURCH WAS RECOVERED, SEALED AND PAPERED. BRICK PILLARS WERE PUT UNDER IT. IN 1926 MR. M.A. LIVELY BUILT THE PRESENT CHOIR LOFT, MADE THE NEW PULPIT AND ALTAR, AND CUT THE LITTLE WINDOW.

THIS CHURCH HAS TWO SILVER COMMUNION SETS. MRS. A.C. WALKER PRESENTED ONE TO THE CHURCH IN JANUARY 1879. IN SEPTEMBER 1926 THE CHURCH PURCHASED AN INDIVIDUAL COMMUNION SET AND REV. L.B. JONES HELD A MEMORIAL SERVICE AND PRESENTED IT TO THE CHURCH IN MEMORY OF JAMES R. COLLINS WHO WAS SUPERINTENDANT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH SEPT. 2, 1925.

THE PULPIT BIBLE WAS PRESENTED TO THE CHURCH BY MRS. CHRISTIAN M. NICKOLS OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK IN JANUARY 1875. THIS WAS IN COMPLIMENT TO HER NIECE MRS. A.C. WALKER. IN 1920 JUTSON SAXSON DEEDED ONE ACRE TO THE CHURCH FOR A CEMETARY.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF APRIL 1921 WALTER DERRY COLLINS WAS BURIED AT THE REAR OF THE CHURCH AT HIS OWN REQUEST. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF BERLIN CEMETARY. THEN MR. TOM SKINNER MOVED HIS SON WILLIAM FROM A CEMETARY NEAR McBEAN GA, AND BURIED HIM AT BERLIN, HIS BEING THE SECOND GRAVE. THE FIRST FUNERAL HELD IN THE CHURCH WAS THAT OF MRS. VICTORIA NAPIER PRESCOTT,

THE FIRST MARRIAGE HELD IN BERLIN CHURCH WAS THAT OF MISS. CARY C. COLLINS,
AND MR. ARLIE MAYES BASS, JUNE 16, 1934. THE BRIDE WAS THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF MR. ZACK W. COLLINS WHO BUILT THE CHURCH.

BERLIN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE NORTH GEORGIA METHODIST CONFERENCE. IT WAS ORIGINALLY PART OF THE HEPHZIBAH, BLYTHE, BETHESDA CIRCUIT. TODAY BERLIN IS ONE OF FIVE CHURCHES ON THE GRACEWOOD CIRCUIT, NAMELY, GRACEWOOD, LIBERTY, BARTON CHAPEL, FRIENDSHIP AND BERLIN.

DURING THE PERIOD FROM 1949 TO 1951 THE CHURCH HAS BEEN RECOVERED, RESEALED, REPAINTED, AND A BEAUTIFUL CARPET INSTALLED. BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS BERLIN IS PROGRESSING IN THE WORK OF THE MASTER, BY THE LOYAL, ZEALOUS POSTERITY OF THE HARDY PIONEERS WHO HAD A VISION AND A DESIRE FOR A BUILDING WHERE PEOPLE COULD WORSHIP THEIR GOD.

BERLIN CHURCH, AS EVERY PASTOR CAN ATTEST, IS KNOWN FOR HOSPITALITY, FISH SUPPERS, AND BARBECUES. THE BEST COOKS IN THE NATION ARE TO BE FOUND AMONG IT'S MEMBERSHIP.

LOCATED EIGHTEEN MILES FROM AUGUSTA, ON THE HEPHZIBAH-MCBEE ROAD, JUST TWO MILES LEFT OF U.S.25, BERLIN SITS MAJESTICALLY BACK IN A PINE GROVE, IMPOSING, FRIENDLY AND INVITING. RICH IN OLD TRADITION AND MEMORIES, YET STILL YOUNG AND GOING STRONG.

MAY GOD BLESS AND PRESERVE YOU, DEAR OLD BERLIN CHURCH.

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES WESLEY DAVIS, L.P.
PASTOR GRACEWOOD CIRCUIT

MAY 5, 1951.

PAGE FOUR
DURING THE YEAR OF 1874 IT WAS FELT THAT THE TOBACCO ROAD COMMUNITY NEEDED A CHURCH. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THAT DESIRE EVANS MORGAN DEEDED ONE ACRE OF LAND TO A BOARD OF NEWLY ORGANIZED TRUSTEE'S FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING A CHURCH THERE-ON. THE DEED BEING DRAWN UP BY W.H. RENNISON, AND RECORDED IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF SUPERIOR COURT, RICHMOND COUNTY, AUGUSTA GEORGIA, DATED JANUARY 10, 1874.

ON TOBACCO ROAD, OF HISTORIC FAME, IN A BEAUTIFUL SPOT, WAS BUILT THE CHURCH, IT WAS CHRISTENED "FRIENDSHIP." FROM ITS BIRTH IT WAS A POPULAR PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY, BECOMING A WELL ATTENDED AND A POWERFUL CHURCH. IT'S ORIGINAL MEMBERSHIP NUMBERED MOSTLY THE JAMES FAMILIES, CHAUVOS FAMILIES AND THE MORGAN CLAN.

MANY MINISTERS HAVE LABORED HERE, AMONG THEM WE LIST REV. BARNEY, GEO. SMITH, REV. W.I. DELPH, REV. RHORREY AND REV. B.P. REED.

FOR MANY YEARS THE RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION USED THE CHURCH FOR A PUBLIC GRADE SCHOOL, AND IN 1914 PURCHASED THE CHURCH. IN THIS SAME YEAR A NEW CHURCH WAS BUILT WHERE SERVICES CONTINUED UNINTERRUPTED UNTIL 1943 THE CHURCH WAS PLACED ON ROLLERS AND WAS MOVED INTEGRALLY ACROSS THE ROAD. IT STANDS ON THIS SITE AT THE PRESENT TIME.
TODAY FRIEND-SHIP CHURCH STANDS, OLD AND SHOWING THE RAVAGES OF TIME, LIKE A FAITHFUL SENTINEL, WHO STANDS WATCH IN FAIR OR FOUL WEATHER, TO GIVE COMFORT AND SPIRITUAL AID TO WHOSOEVER WILL COME.

MOST OF THE OLD FAITHFUL MEMBERS HAVE PASSED ON, MANY HAVE MOVED AWAY. THE COMMUNITY THAT ONCE SURROUNDED THE CHURCH WAS DISSOLVED WHEN THE MILITARY AUTHORITY OF CAMP GORDON TOOK ALL LAND BETWEEN U.S. 1 AND U.S. 78, THENCE NORTH TO BUTLER'S CREEK, NOW THE CHURCH STANDS DESERTED, AMID THE PINES ON TOBACCO ROAD. JUST ELEVEN MILES SOUTH ON U.S. 1 FROM AUGUSTA, TURN LEFT AT SIGN, TRAVEL ONE HUNDRED YARDS AND YOU ARE AT FRIEND-SHIP.

A FEW FAITHFUL MEMBERS ARE HOLDING THE CHURCH TOGETHER. THEY GATHER EACH SUNDAY AT 3:30PM. FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL, ONLY ON THE FIRST AND THIRD SUNDAY AFTERNOON ARE PREACHING SERVICES CONDUCTED. THERE BEING FIVE STATIONS IN THE GRACEWOOD CIRCUIT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE MORNING OR NIGHT SERVICES.

THE HAPPY MEMORIES OF THE PAST SALUTE YOU DEAR OLD FRIENDSHIP CHURCH. THE FUTURE IS OPTIMISTIC, BUT IN THE EYES OF FAITH—HOPEFUL. "WELL DONE THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT."

END.

CHARLES WESLEY DAVIS, L.P.A.S.
PASTOR.

PAGE TWO.
Liberty Church has the distinction of being the first Methodist church erected in Richmond County, and possibly the second in the state of Georgia. Grant's Meeting House in Wilkes County being the first.

One hundred and fifty nine years ago Francis Asbury, a Primitive Bishop of the Methodist Church, made an entry in his diary that will substantiate the above. This record states that "After crossing the Savannah River at Augusta in 1790 he rode in a south westerly direction to the S.C. Church in Richmond County."

Rev. George G. Smith, referring to this incident in his "History of Georgia Methodism," says that this church was located near Brothersville, which town is now known as Hephzibah.

The exact date of its erection is lost in the past. Bishop Asbury stood behind its pulpit in 1790. Therefore we associate Liberty Church with Methodism as of 1790. It could have possibly been the results of the work of two Methodist preachers, Rev. Thomas Humphries, and Rev. John Major, sent to Georgia by the Virginia Methodist Conference in 1786 as missionaries. These two men formed a circuit around Augusta extending to Wilkes County.

In one of the early years following the Revolutionary War, a tribe of Collins Brothers and probably sisters made
MADE THEIR ADVENT IN RICHMOND COUNTY. THERE WERE MOSES COLLINS, LEWIS COLLINS, SAMUEL AND STEPHEN COLLINS AND POSSIBLY OTHERS. ONE OF THESE BROTHERS SAMUEL OR STEPHEN CUT THE FIRST LOG THAT WENT INTO THE ORIGINAL CHURCH BUILDING THAT STOOD UPON THE SITE OF WHAT IS NOW LIBERTY CHURCH, AND IS BURIED NOT FAR FROM THAT SACRED SPOT. THE CHURCH BORE FOR A TIME THE NAME OF ITS ORIGINAL PROJECTOR, EITHER SAMUEL OR STEPHEN COLLINS AND THIS FACT EXPLAINS THE INITIALS "S.C." USED BY BISHOP ASBURY IN ITS EARLY TITLE. UP TO THE PRESENT TIME THERE HAVE BEEN THREE CHURCHES ERECTED UPON THIS SITE AS TIME AND SERVICE CAUSED DETERIORATION.


IN THIS CONNECTION IT IS INTERESTING TO KNOW THAT REV. ALFRED T. MANN, ONE OF THE ABLEST AND MOST ELOQUENT MINISTERS KNOWN TO GEORGIA METHODISM, PREACHED HIS MAIDEN SERMON IN OLD LIBERTY CHURCH, AND AFTER FIFTY YEARS OR MORE OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE IN HIS MASTER'S CAUSE THE SAME HALLOWED WALLS ECHOED THE
LAST PUBLIC UTTERANCE THAT CAME FROM HIS GIFTED LIPS AND CONSECRATED HEART.

THE PIONEER SPIRIT OF FERVENT, TRUE METHODISM THAT WAS INSTILLED BY THE STALWART CIRCUIT RIDING "PARSON" STILL BURNS BRIGHTLY IN THIS SACRED SPOT IN RICHMOND COUNTY.

THE OLD TIMBERS OF THE CHURCH ARE SATURATED WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS WHICH COMES WITH CONSECRATED SERVICE IN GODS PROGRAM TO PROMOTE AND EXTEND EVANGELICAL HOLINESS.

LIBERTY WAS FIRST PLACED IN THE "BLYTHEHEPHZIBAH CIRCUIT," WHERE IT REMAINED MANY YEARS.

EARLY IN THE 1900'S LIBERTY WAS PUT IN THE GRACEWOOD CIRCUIT, WHERE IT REMAINS TO THE PRESENT TIME.

THE EVER SHIFTING POPULATION HAS MADE INROADS UPON THE MEMBERSHIP ROLL, BUT THO' NOW CONSIDERED "OUT OF THE WAY" AND "STRICTLY RURAL" IT HAS OVER A HUNDRED MEMBERS. A WONDERFUL CHURCH SCHOOL, YOUNG PEOPLES LEAGUE, WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER MEETING AND BIBLE STUDY GROUPS. LIBERTY CHURCH, LIKE OLD SOLDIERS "NEVER DIE," NOR WILL IT "FADE AWAY," NAY, IT SHALL LIVE FOREVER IN METHODISM, AND IN THE HEARTS AND MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLESSED HERE.

Eleven miles S.W. of Augusta on U.S. 25, Turn Left at Richmond Factory, Follow Dirt Road (and signs) to Liberty Church, Richmond County's Oldest Methodist, and Georgia's Second. You Can Almost Hear The Past Whisper if You Listen, Certainly Feel It.

WELCOME

Preaching every Third Sunday at 11 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Church School every Sunday 10 a.m.