

DOWNLOAD PDF A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF SPRING CITY, PA

Chapter 1 : History | Bethel United Methodist Church

A brief history of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Spring City, Pa: together with, Sketches of the other leading churches of the town Item Preview.

Bethel is a Hebrew word meaning house of God. It can also be a house of worship for sailors or circuit riders, in our case. In England, it is a place of worship for Protestants belonging to any church except the Anglican. Bethel is found many places in the Bible as the name of a specific location. In May, a committee was formed to procure ground and make plans for the erection of a church building. Edward Brownback made a grant of land and on November 26, the first building was completed and dedicated at the bottom of the cemetery hill on the corner of what is now named Bethel Church and Ellis Woods Roads. At the time of the dedication there were about twenty members connected with the society among which were Harry Brownback, Jr. Bethel remained on the Pottstown Circuit until when Bethel and Springville Spring City Methodist Church, of which Bethel is the mother church, united to form a new circuit. Sebring was appointed pastor of the united circuit. In , Bethel was made a separate charge and the Reverend Alexander Wiggins was appointed pastor. The original church building was found adequate until when the increased attendance at both the church and Sunday School sessions made it necessary to enlarge and remodel the old structure. A meeting was called on August 15, , in order to discuss putting a steam heater underneath the church. The Building of New Bethel The remodeled church building at the bottom of the hill was made to serve the needs of the membership from until when further attendance increases made it necessary to build a new structure. On July 1, , among the bills presented was a bill of Mr. Young for a sketch and ground plan for a new church. The Trustees accepted the plans at their meeting on August 5, Ground for the new church was broken the last week of June and it was expected to be ready for occupancy before January 1, McBeth was the present pastor. The edifice was erected adjacent to the parsonage. The church was built because of the work and determination of its members. It was the members who dug out the basement by hand. Farmers donated their stone walls, also a stone farm house on Kolb Road was donated. Members hauled the stone to the site. The building contractor was A. The cornerstone of Bethel M. Church was laid Sunday, August 24, at 3: This is the present church building located on approximately nine acres of land bought from John DeFrain. The following were members of the building committee: As always, there were those who did not support the idea because of the cost involved. You can understand their concerns when you look at the times we were living in. The nation was in a depression. People were out of work but there was no unemployment compensation, no welfare, no food stamps, and no food banks. Several banks failed and there was no E. Eventually, the customers of failed banks received about 10 cents on the dollar. Storing and canning food for winter use was a necessity. Field corn became a staple in many diets. After husking the corn, the housewife dried it in the oven of her cook stove, shelled it by hand, removed the chaff by winnowing and then it was ready to be ground into cornmeal at the local mill. Then it was cooked and the result was called mush. Wood and coal were the most common sources of heat. Years ago, Bethel took a collection for the poor at every communion service. Money received in these offerings was often used to purchase a ton of coal for a needy church family. The dedication services of our new church were held on May 3, Anderson was our pastor then. Richardson was our Bishop and George W. Henson was the District Superintendent. The sermon at the morning worship that day was preached by Dr. An afternoon and evening service was also held for the celebration but the actual dedication service took place at 3: The presentation of the new building was made by the trustees with about people present. During the day, eight ministers participated and the choirs of Spring City and Royersford United Methodist Churches also participated. The church membership and average Sunday School attendance was approximately members. On Sunday, May 1, , the first birthday of the new church was celebrated. Beyer, our oldest living minister at that time. He served Bethel in There was a service each evening that week with a special speaker and music.

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A Brief History of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Spring City, Pa Together With Sketches of the Other Leading Churches of the Town by Jacob K. Jones Together With Sketches of the Other Leading Churches of the Town.

The seed that Supplee sowed was a small tract of land which he dedicated for the erection of a place of Christian worship. The land was situated in Worcester Township on the southern brow of what is now called Bethel Hill; a cemetery now occupies the site of the original church. Hans Supplee never lived to see that first small, stone chapel completed. He died while it was being erected and was buried in the small plot of land set aside for a cemetery. At the start of the Revolution, Peter, son of Hans Supplee, and his two younger brothers enlisted in the Army of the American Revolution. A month later, General Washington met with General Greene and his staff on the lawn of the Supplee house, located near the church, to plan the Battle of Germantown. As fate would decree, unpredictable weather brought fog and rain, enabling the British General Howe to deliver a stunning defeat to the already ragged and demoralized American soldiers. The colonial army used Bethlehem and Skippack Pikes and carried their wounded and dying with them. It was this event which first brought historic prominence to the little church at Belfry later called Bethel Hill. The early congregation at Belfry was non-denominational. Yet, it apparently leaned towards Methodism, as witnessed by the visits of the newly arrived Methodist preachers sent from England by John Wesley. One of the early itinerant preachers sent to America was Joseph Pilmore, and it is in his journal that mention is made of the congregation at Metchin. Evans and I set out in the morning for Metchin, a place about twenty miles from the City, to open a New Chapel which has been built by a few persons who loved the Redeemer, and which to advance His kingdom in the world. Evans gave an excellent Exhortation, and I concluded with solemn prayer. In the evening, we had a love-feast, and the simple-hearted followers of Jesus spoke with much freedom and life. Thus the wilderness becomes as a fruitful field, and springs rise up in the desert. Pilmore returned to England briefly and broke with John Wesley. He then returned to America to serve the Protestant Episcopal Church. The Reverend Henry Boehm mentions this event and its profound effect upon the small group of Christian worshippers at Metchin in his reminiscences. He wrote that near Morristown [he meant Norristown], a house of worship had been erected by the Reverend Mr. Derner, a Swedish Minister. After hearing the Reverend Joseph Pilmore, a Methodist missionary, speak, his church property and the society were transferred to the Methodists. The land was part of a tract of almost acres subject to a yearly payment of 55 bushels of wheat forever to James Logan and others and their heirs. The property was to be used for a worship house, burying place and a schoolhouse. The latter building was to be used by the English and the Deutsch Germans with the English to have two parts of the time and the Germans one part. The schedule gave the English the first two years. Joseph Parker Norris and his wife, Elizabeth, had become entitled to the yearly rent of wheat. On June 15, , they declined to receive the rent of wheat and instead received a sum of money from Weber as a final settlement. Of these churches, Bethel Hill and Evansburg are still active Methodist communities of worship. The building is one story in height and constructed of brick and stone. In , a Sunday School was organized and a constitution adopted. Two years later, the circuit pastor, Richard Ridgway, led the congregation in building a six room parsonage. It was a stone structure located on Skippack Pike just down the slope to the southward from the church. During the difficult years following the Civil War, the church grew slowly. In , the congregation applied for and was granted a charter. The advent of a new century seemed to herald a new life for the Bethel Hill Congregation. There was a series of improvements in church organization and physical plant. In , a new front was added to the existing church building. In , Edwin Supplee, the great-grandson of Peter Supplee, petitioned the trustees of the cemetery for permission to erect a monument in memory of Peter, a soldier in the Revolutionary War. The requested permission was granted and the monument was erected. On Saturday, September 3, , the Supplee family held a family reunion at Bethel Hill Church with the objective of dedicating the monument. During the pastorate of Reverend A. Graham, ,

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memorial stained glass windows were installed in the church, and the schoolhouse adjoining the church property was purchased for use as a church school building. In , during the pastorate of Reverend C. Clyde Livergood, an electric lighting system and a pipe organ were installed in the church. It was not until many years later that the historical significance of this organ became known. It had faithfully served two churches prior to its installation in Bethel Hill. After its removal from Bethel Hill, it was purchased by the Rahns Church in Montgomery County and continued to provide sacred music to the Christian community. During this period, the church building was painted and the interior beautified. New pews, pulpit, altar furniture, and hardwood floors were installed. The organ housing was refinished to match the finish of the new furniture. Shortly after his arrival, the Reverend Howells and his wife presented a brass plaque to the church as a memorial to the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldiers who were buried in the cemetery. It was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 27, , with appropriate ceremonies. The service in the church was followed by a ceremony in the cemetery. A firing squad from the William E. Hare Post of the American Legion of Lansdale participated at the graveside service. Corson was the principle speaker. The eventful year of saw Bethel Hill Church strengthening its position in the Christian world. Fifty charter members were enrolled with Mrs. Miles Perry as President, Mrs. Wilmer Smith as Recording Secretary, and Mrs. Harry Miller as Treasurer. This society was the forerunner of the United Methodist Women which is still an active organization at Bethel Hill today. During this period several memorials were presented to the church: Disaster gave rise to church improvements in One Sunday morning in the spring of , the rear part of the Church School building burned. The damage was repaired on contract and the men of the church continued improvements by digging out a basement by hand! The result was a finished basement, including a kitchen, underneath the school building. Shortly thereafter, the church building was entirely renovated. Indirect lighting fixtures were donated by Reverend Herbert R. Howells, son of Richard M. Howells, and a new plastered ceiling was installed. The church was fortunate enough to be able to secure two plots of ground adjoining its property. The first piece adjoined the cemetery and allowed an expansion of the burial area. The second piece adjoined the church with foot frontage on Skippack Pike. The owner contributed an additional 50 foot frontage and this is the site of the current parsonage. On July 26, , Reverend Richard M. Howells preached his final sermon at Bethel Hill and an era had come to an end. Twenty-five years of devoted service which saw the church prosper and strengthen in service for Christ had concluded. The years following, , saw continued improvement in buildings, grounds and church programs. Lundgren and his family were its first occupants. One of the major improvements of the new parsonage was closet space. On June 12, , under the leadership of Reverend George Alt, a new Christian Education building, adjacent to the original education building, was consecrated. On April 9, , the fellowship hall of the same building was dedicated to the memory of Reverend Richard M. Howells in appreciation for his many years of service to Bethel. The vine planted by Hans Supplee had now intertwined with others to become part of an 11 million member vineyard. The seventies were years of gradual growth defining both a mission and place in the expanding community. A second Sunday morning worship service was added and the parking lot was enlarged while Reverend David R. Cramp was pastor from In January of , the ground-breaking for this facility was officiated by Reverend David Shellenberger. Renovations were also made to the sanctuary at this time to make it wheelchair accessible while remaining sensitive to the historical integrity of the building. The problem was resolved by reversing the interior of the church to allow the addition of a narthex next to the parking lot. During the initial period of his recovery, the pastoral charge of the church was handled by two interim pastors, Reverend Richard Weand and William Snyder. Sandra Myers as pastor. As the church celebrated its th year in , Bethel Hill had attained many goals in addition to its facility improvements and expansions. In its th anniversary year, the church membership had grown to over members. In November, , Reverend Myers announced to the congregation that she would be leaving January 1, for health reasons. January 15, saw the beginning of another era: As a sign of that continuing growth, the congregation purchased the property adjacent to the church on Skippack Pike on May 25,

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