GOD IS SO GOOD !

A History of the Methodist Church in Smithville, Mississippi

Forward

One day as I was sitting in the church office preparing a Memorial Service for New Salem, I began to think of the past year and a half that I have served on the Smithville Charge. It was during this time that the church was preparing a book on a glimpse back in time, how it was then, how it used to be. Cards were handed out on various Sundays so each person could write a memory of an experience in being a part of the church. As we look back and compile this story, we cannot only see memories but a growth, a time line, so to speak, of Smithville United Methodist Church. Each recollection speaks of a blessing from God in the building of a church and of a sustaining faith that keeps us coming back to this hallowed place each Sunday.

The sermon that I was preparing looked at a time in the journey of God's people as they crossed the Jordan River to the land that had been given to them. As they crossed, the waters were halted from flowing. Once on the other side, they took stones from the Jordan and set up a memorial for what God had done to serve as a reminder of His guidance in that journey. This compilation of stories from the young and old, those who are still here and those who have gone to other places, also represents a memorial for the journey of the Smithville United Methodist Church. These are stories of how God in Jesus Christ has blessed this community by the establishing of this special place.

Thucydides, the Greek historian said, "The whole earth is the tomb of heroic men, and their story is graven not only on stones over their clay, but abides everywhere, without a visible symbol, woven into the stuff of others' lives." True are the stories of this book; they are not only words on paper but pieces of the life of each person represented on the pages that follow. Woven together, they become a part of each of our lives and the life of this church.

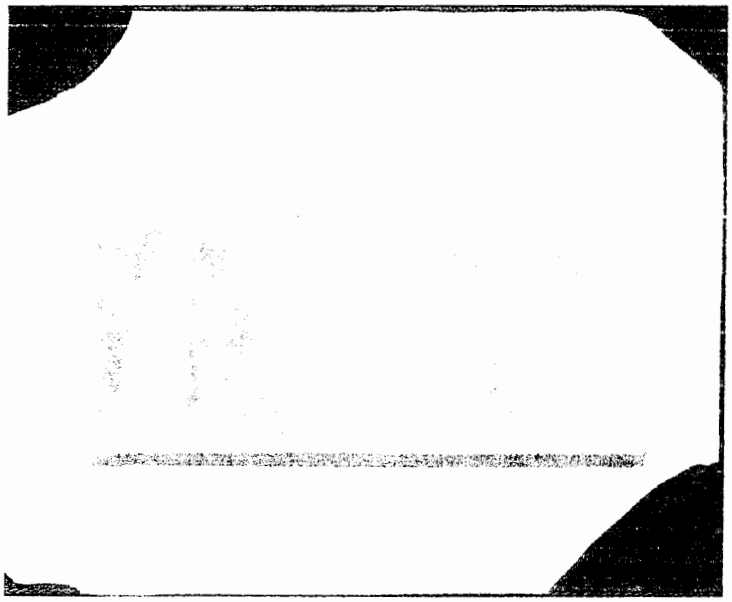
Rev. Darrell Sanderson

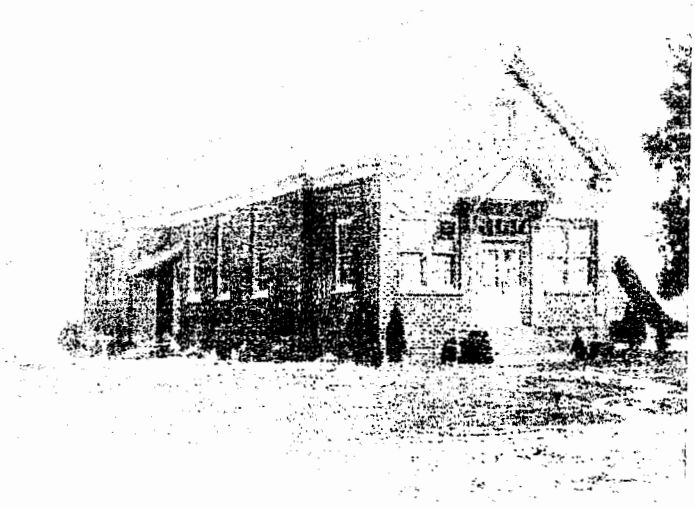
From the author

This recording of the past has been a fascinating journey. It has lead to a greater understanding of the words of Jesus, "Lo, I am with you always..." for He has been faithful to be ever at our side in this church over these three centuries. Thanks be to God and to this congregation for letting me write our history.

Rebecca Vallarian

SMITHVILLE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
SOUTH



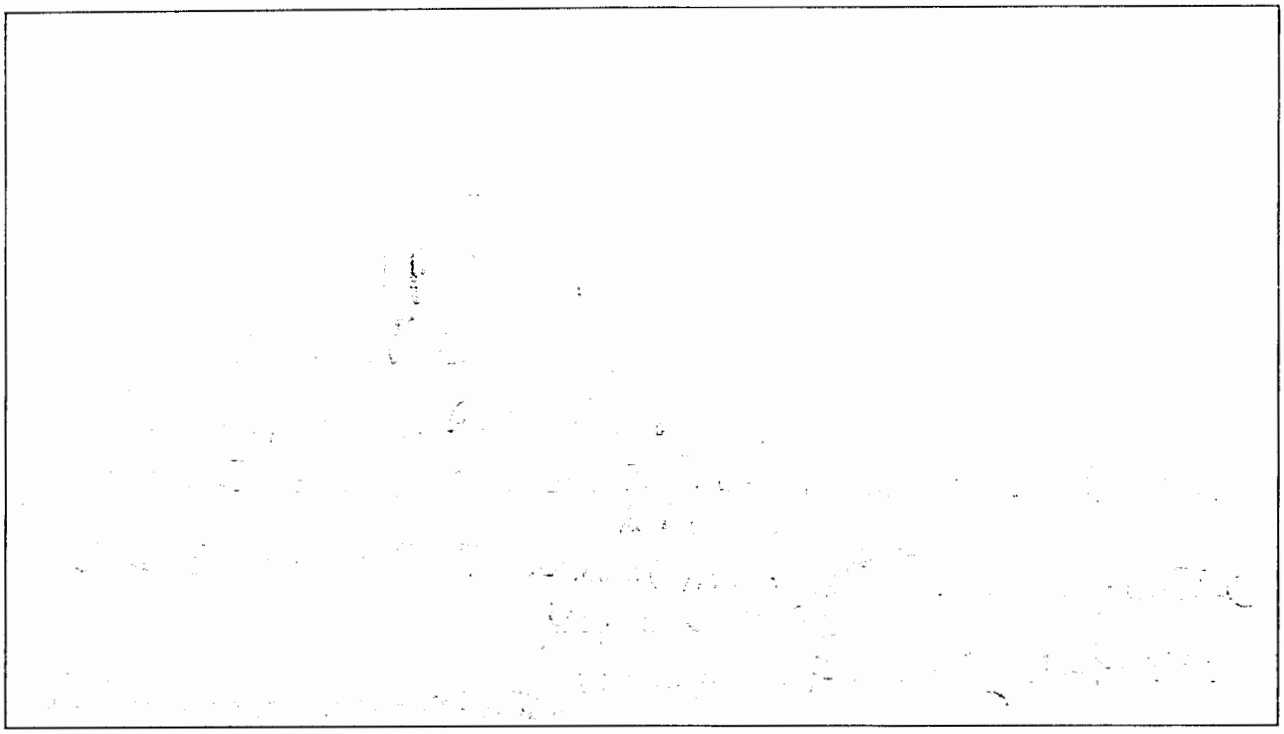


THEN

UNTIL

NOW

SMITHVILLE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH



"Visited in 34 different homes, preached 11 times, 3 burial services. Traveled over 600 miles. Read 3 books: one on missions, denominations, English, read the daily paper. Took 5 meals out, several meals of good Ribs, sausage the people sent in. Also a good pounding the people gave. I think we (are) going (to) have (a) good year."

And good years have far outnumbered the bad in the history of our church in Smithville.

Tradition says that Coleman H. Ballard and his wife Mary deeded the site of our present church to the trustees on July 19, 1858, for the sum of ten dollars. No recorded record of the deed exists but a few months later, on October 14, 1858, Coleman H. Ballard sold adjoining land to Henry W. Stegall, who was also a trustee of the Smithville Methodist Church. In that recorded transfer of land, the properties belonging to the Methodist Church and to the Baptist Church were removed as property already given ("less and except"). This reference in that deed, then, constitutes the earliest legal deed to the property of our Methodist Church.

In 1960 the Smithville Methodist trustees, G. O. Irvin, Everett Davis, and J. R. Shelton, having no knowledge of the October 14, 1858 deed, appeared before the Chancery Court of Monroe County, Mississippi, to confirm title and declare "...that they and their predecessors in office have been in possession of the Lot now designated as being Lot 19 in the town of Smithville...and that there has been on said Lot the Smithville Methodist Church for over 100 years prior to (this) hearing, and that while the (trustees) and their predecessors in office have no actual conveyance to the property..." were declared "...to be the rightful owners of said land."

True title to this land around Smithville was held until 1832 by the Native American Chickasaw nation. Settlers had quickly moved into the North Mississippi/West Alabama area in the early 1800's and had established two states, Mississippi in 1817 and Alabama in 1819. This "occupation" was in clear violation of treaties signed between the Chickasaws and the United States government. Pressure from white settlers for more and more of the Chickasaw land had resulted in the final ceding of the northern part of the new state to the government by the Treaty of Pontotoc in 1832. A government land office had opened there to settle disputes between white settlers and the zChickasaw tribe. (The Choctaw nation had already given up most of their lands in the central part of the state.) The Treaty of Pontotoc allowed those Chickasaws that wished to remain on ancestral land to file a claim for 640 acres. Most of the requests were approved, but often white settlers quickly duped the Native Americans into signing over the land for less than a fair price.

A Chickasaw Indian named Co-Chubby on October 29, 1836, had been granted his choice of 640 acres under the terms of this treaty. Part of the land granted to him was the land on which our church now sits. In less than two months, on December 3, 1836, Co-Chubby had sold his land to James B. Couch for $1,000. The land was soon divided, sold, and resold, and by 1858, Coleman H. Ballard and his wife Mary owned 320 acres (one half of the original section), having paid $6,500 for it. Henry Stegall's deed of 1858 refers to the Methodist Church as already having been in place, so we can only speculate about the actual date of construction. Sometime between the dates of these two recorded deeds, 1836 and 1858, our church was built.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

MONROE COUNTY

IN THE CHANCERY COURT

MAY TERM 1950

NO. 13,817

G. O. IRVIN,)
EVERETT DAVIS,)
J. R. SHELTON,)

TRUSTEES OF SMITHVILLE METHODIST CHURCH,

COMPLAINANTS

VS.

ALL PERSONS CLAIMING ANY INTEREST IN LOT NO. 19 IN THE TOWN OF SMITHVILLE, MISSISSIPPI,

DEFENDANTS

FINAL DECREE

This cause coming on for final hearing on Bill of Complaint and Decree Pro Confesso; and it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court that the Complainants are entitled to the relief prayed for:

And it appearing further to the Court that the Complainants and their predecessors in Office have been in possession of the Lot now designated as being Lot No. 19 in the Town of Smithville, Mississippi, as shown on Plat Book No. 1, at Page 85, in the Office of the Chancery Clerk of Monroe County, Mississippi, and that there has been on said Lot the Smithville Methodist Church for over one-hundred (100) years prior to this hearing, and that while the Complainants and their predecessors in Office have no actual conveyance to the property described as Lot No. 19 in the Town of Smithville, that as a matter of law, the Complainants are entitled to a Decree from this Court declaring Complainants to be the rightful owners of said land and confirming title in the Complainants and their Successors in Office;

It is therefore ordered, adjudged and decreed that Lot No. 19 in the Town of Smithville as designated in Plat Book No. 1, Page 85, in the Office of the Chancery Clerk of Monroe County, Mississippi, be, and it is hereby confirmed in Complainants, G. O. Irvin, Everett Davis, and J. R. Shelton,

Trustees of Smithville Methodist Church, Smithville, Mississippi, as the rightful and legal owners thereof, and the Clerk of this Court is hereby authorized and directed to enter on the Tract Book and the Land Records of Monroe County, Mississippi, this Decree, which shall be for all purposes an adjudication and determination that the Complainants and their Successors in Office are the legal, equitable and record title owners of the property described as Lot No.19 in the Town of Smithville, Mississippi, and the record title to said Lot is hereby confirmed in the Complainants and their Successors in Office;

Ordered, Adjudged and Decreed in Open Court this the 17th day of May, A.D., 1960.

Filed in my office 17th day of May 1960

Haran R. Young Clerk

By _____ D. C.

29-588 ✓

William H. Dyer
Chancellor

THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
County of Monroe

I, Haran R. Young, Clerk of the Chancery Court in and for said County and State, do hereby certify that the within instrument was filed in this office for record on the 1 day of June, 1960, at 9 o'clock A.M., and the same was truly recorded in Deed Record 152 Page 345, on this the 3 day of June, 1960

State Documentary Stamps in the value of $ _____ were duly attached and cancelled.

Given under my hand and seal of office at Aberdeen, Mississippi.

Haran R. Young, Clerk By Corrine A. Moffett, D.C.

*FEES for filing, recording, certificates of record and indexing on Sectional Index, $_____

MONROE CO. MISSISSIPPI

Co. Ch.
Deed To
James D. Couch

This Indenture made this 3rd day of December 1836 between Co Chubby of the Chickasaw nation of Indians of the first Part and James D. Couche of the second Part witnesseth that for and in consideration of eighteen hundred Dollars Paid to the Part of the first Part doth hereby Bargain Sell, and and deliver to the Part of the second Section of Land numbered Six in Township Four and range numbered nine East of the basis Meridian which has been Located for the Part of the first as his name to have and to hold unto the Said Land hereby Conveyed to the Part of the first second Part in fee simple, his heirs and assigns forever free from the claim of all Claimants In testimony whereof the Part of the first Part hath hereunto and delivered these presents the day and Year first above written

Test. John P. Mizell
H. B. Kimbell

Co. Chubby his X mark

The Commissioners appointed for the Purpose certify that the within named Co Chubby is capable of managing and take care of his affairs. Given under our hands the 3rd day of December 1836

Ed. McDonell
Benj. Love

Let to his to Pa his mark

I, Benjamin Reynolds agent for the Chickasaw nation of Indians hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and Information the above certificate is true I further certify that a fair consideration has been Paid for the within conveyed Lands Given under my hand this day of December 1836

Benj Reynolds C. A.

Pontotoc December 1st 1836

appeared Mr Carroll Examining agent

The State of Mississippi } Personally appeared before me James Wilson
Pontotoc County } Clerk of the Probate Court of said County John P. Mizell one of the subscribing witnesses to the foregoing deed who being first duly sworn deposeth & saith that he saw Co Chubby sign seal & deliver the same to the above named James D. Couch on the day that it bears date & that he & H. B. Kimbell subscribed the same as Witnesses in presence of ~~[illegible]~~ the said Co Chubby and in presence of each other at the time of its execution Given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office the 15th of December 1836

J. J. Wilson Cl P C

The following is a translation of the deed shown on the previous page.

Co Chubby
Sold to
James D. Couch

This indenture made this 3rd day of December 1836 between Co Chubby of the Chickasaw nation of Indians of the first part and James D. Couch of the second part witnessed that for and in consideration of eighteen hundred dollars paid to the party of the first part doth hereby bargain, sell, deed, and convey to the party of the second, section of land numbered six in Township twelve and range numbered nine East of the basic meridian such has been located for the party of the first as his reserve to have and to hold unto the said land hereby conveyed to the party of the second part in fee simple, his heirs and asigns forever free from the claim of all claimants in testimony thereof the party of this first part hath sealed and delivered these present the day and year first above written:

Test. John B. Mizell
W.B. Kimbell

Co Chubby his X seal

We commissioners appointed for the purpose certify that the within named Co Chubby is capable to manage and take care of his affairs. Given under our hands the 3rd day of December 1836.

E.P. McDowell

Ish to be to Pa
Benj Love

I Benjamin Reynolds agent for the Chickasaw nation of Indians hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge and information the above certificate is true. I further certify that a fair consideration has been paid for the within conveyed lands. Given under my hand the day of December 10 in the year 1836.

Benj. Reynolds C.A.

Pontotoc December 10th 1836

The state of Mississippi
Pontotoc County

Appointed WM Carroll Examining Agent
Personally appeared before me Iannis I Wilson
Clerk of the Probate Court of said County John B. Mizell one of the subscribing witnesses to the foregoing and who being first duly sworn deposit said that he saw Co Chubby sign seal and deliver the same to the above named James D. Couch on the day that is transpired and that he and W.B. Kimbell subscribed the same as witness in presence of this said Co Chubby and in presence of each other at the time of its execution. Given under my hand and the seal of said court at office the 10th of December 1836.

I.I. Wilson Clerk

"As early as the 1830's there was a Methodist Church in the Smithville vicinity," wrote Hilda Harmon in her history of Smithville in 1950. This church was Siloam Methodist Church, once located near the present day Burdine and Maxey cemeteries on Pearce Chapel Road. It served the Smithville area in the 1830's to the 1850's as a church and as a school. One early pastor was William L. Bonner, who entered the ministry in 1838 at the age of 24. He had been sent to this area by the Alabama Conference of the church. He was also a teacher at the school that met, as was often the custom, in the church building during the week.

Miss Jesse Pierce remembers, "It had a setting of big trees and was where they held the great camp meeting. They came from a long distance and tented (camped) on the old campground. Here they shouted, sang, and preached and would go off in trances. I think this frenzy was so exhausting, they would faint.... They would lie in a state of coma for some time." She also mentions in her history of Smithville, the Rev. Bonner.

Extensive research by Mary Anna Riggan for an article in *The Journal of Monroe County History* states, "From the deeds recorded, Siloam Methodist Church and Cemetery once sat on at least two and one-fourth acres of land." Coleman H. Ballard appears as a trustee for this church, described in the legal papers of 1857 as a "...Preaching House for the Athens Circuit in the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South..." and also called "...Siloam Meeting House." One of the earliest graves in the Siloam Cemetery is that of a nine-day-old baby. The date on the tombstone is September 5, 1884.

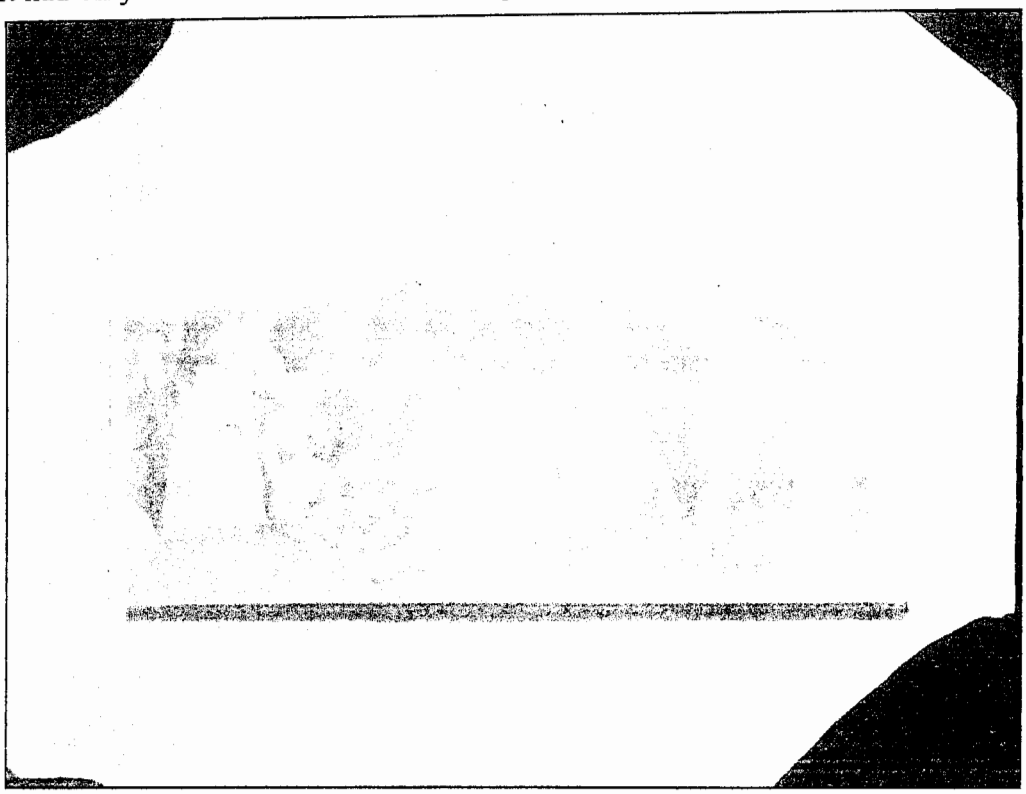
From the description Miss Jesse Pierce gave, the cemetery was located west of the church and today only a little part of it remains as the Maxey and the Burdine cemeteries. "All the other part of this big cemetery had been plowed under years before," stated Miss Pierce. "By now Smithville had a Methodist Church and what was left of the members moved to Smithville and old Siloam fell into decay." So our church's history actually extends beyond the existence of the present church into a record of its predecessor, the Siloam Methodist Church.

This area of North Mississippi was in the Alabama and the Mobile Conferences of the Methodist Church, an area that covered both Alabama and Mississippi and often overlapped with the Memphis Conference until 1870 when the North Mississippi Conference was formed. Many of our early ministers were circuit riders who often served an area for only one year before being assigned elsewhere. Most of the Smithville preachers during this era were very young, just beginning their ministry, and were given the small village of Smithville before being assigned to Athens, a much larger town and the county seat of Monroe County at that time.

Some of the earliest preachers stayed in the Alabama Conference (Rev. Bonner being one who did), but most moved to the North Mississippi Conference. The Civil War had produced hard times and hard feelings between the Northern and the Southern states, and the organization of the Methodist church felt the full brunt of the struggle. By 1844 the Church had split into the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, over the issues created by slavery and the question of Annual and General Conference powers. The Church did not come back together as The Methodist Church until 1939. That split in the church is why the cornerstone of our present church building says, "M.E.C. South Erected 1933."

The first church erected was a one story, wooden building. The trustees of the church, according to Hilda Harmon's history, were Henry W. Stegall (who had bought the adjoining land in October, 1858), I. W. Thompson, O. Martin, I. A. Thompson, and G. W. Tucker. The pastor was W. S. Shipman. On December 24, 1884, immediately after a Christmas service, the church was totally destroyed by fire. "It is said that the fire started from candles on the tree. All the church records were destroyed." From the records of the Smithville Baptist Church comes this message: "The minutes of January 4, 1885, state that the church building was offered to the Methodist Brethren as a place of worship since their church building accidently burned."

By springtime of 1885 the members had built another house of worship. "This was a wooden structure painted white and (it) had green shutters on the windows. The pillars used were made of native rock and the sills and braces were made of hewed logs. There was a belfry and steeple and the church had two entrances on the front. This building was one story and was thirty feet wide and forty feet long. It had only the auditorium in which all phases of worship were carried on."



Looking at this picture, dated probably in the late 1890's and contributed by Miss Louise Davis, one can see the description matches exactly. Her father, born in 1881, is the young man on the far left of the picture. Notice that a cross can be seen through the doorway. The men and the women both have hand fans and umbrellas for the heat. One man in front has a guitar.

In our church office is a large, pulpit Bible, copyright 1884. We believe that it is the Bible bought for use in this new church. It is in a fragile state of disrepair, but hopes are to display it under glass for all to see.

In a very few years Smithville Methodist went from the tragedy of losing a church to the joy of helping begin a new church—the First Methodist Church in Amory. Dr. G. S. Bryan, a prominent physician in the area, wrote in his *Remembrances of Amory, Mississippi*: "When I came (to Amory) in 1889, the Methodists had no building of their own, but they had an organization. A Mr. Whitehurst was serving as pastor for the church at Smithville and preached once or twice per month for the church here. He preached in the little church belonging to the Christian Church. The Christian Church tore down and brought with them a little rectangular house when Cotton Gin Port moved toward the railroad in the new town of Amory. It was rebuilt on the corner of Fourth Street. This little church was freely loaned to any people who might desire to conduct worship in it. Pretty soon after this time the Methodist erected a frame church house on the corner where the present church now stands."

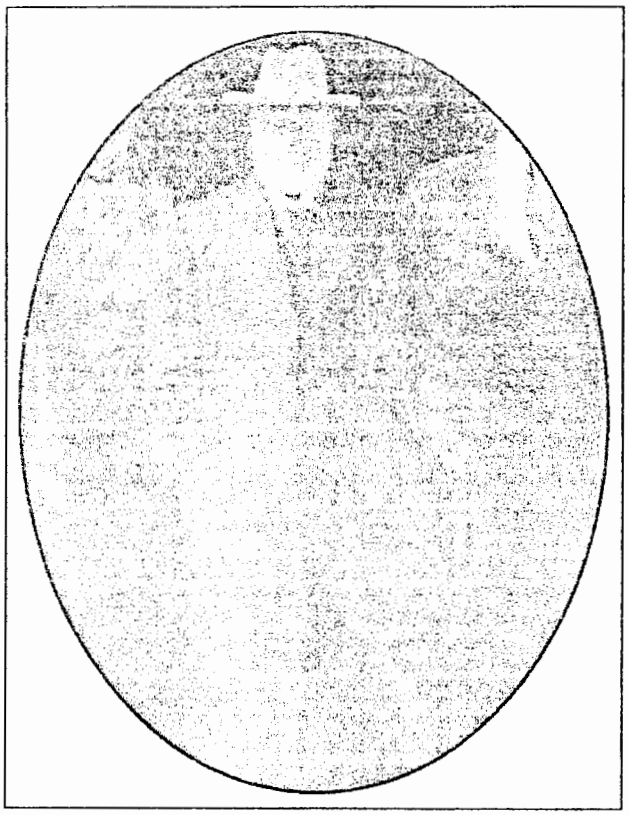
"Thus began the Amory church as a part of Smithville Circuit thirty-six years ago."

—from a pamphlet compiled and edited in 1923 by Rev. W. R. Lott, Pastor of the M.E.C. South, Amory.

"A minister by the name of Whitehurst was the first Methodist preacher to hold services in Amory."

—from Mrs. William L. Underwood in her *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* Amory, Mississippi, March, 1934.

It seems that Smithville continued its connection with the small Amory congregation for several years; our pastors, F. A. Whitson, W. W. Woollard, J .E. Buck, D. L. Cogdell, K. M. Harrison, and E. P. Craddock, upon leaving Smithville, were assigned the very next year to Amory. Records of both churches indicate that from 1901 to 1903 we shared the pastors H. T. Cummingham, S. L. Pope, and O. L. Savage. W. S. Shipman, who had served Smithville from 1882 to 1885 and had seen our church through the Christmas Eve fire and the spring rebuilding, pastored the Amory church from 1905 to 1909. He was about 40 years of age when he served at Smithville and about 63 years of age when he served at Amory. The Rev. K. M. Harrison liked the area so much that he asked to be returned to Amory upon his death, and he is buried in the Amory Masonic Cemetery.



Rev. K.M. Harrison

Rev. W.S. Shipman

The church office at Smithville holds the files and records of many of our pastors. The most interesting are the quarterly reports, where the P.C. (Preacher in Charge) gives his observations on the "state of the church." Many of these are hand written; some are typed, carbon copies; all presented here are exactly as they were written.

In Their Own Words

Sept. 19. 1909 The question asked on the form: "Are there reports from the preachers of their labors since the last Church Conference?" The reply: "...church labors improving. Sunday School at 10 o'clock AM and Prayer Meeting every Sunday evening at 3 o'clock PM."

—Bro. W. A. Bowlin, P.C.

A careful look at the assessments of 1912 shows that Smithville was to pay $66 toward the salary of the P.E. (Presiding Elder). The presiding elder was like the present-day District Superintendent; the name change occurring in 1939. Our total assessment was $226, quite a large sum of money for that time.

ABERDEEN DISTRICT.

ASSESSMENTS 1912.

Name of Charge	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Aberdeen	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Amory and Nettleton	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Aberdeen Circuit	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
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Fulton	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Greenwood Springs	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Houlka	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Houston	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Mantachie	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Northeast Lafayette	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Oxford	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Oxford Circuit	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Pontotoc	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Pontotoc Circuit	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Sharon	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Smithville	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
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Vardaman	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Verona	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Total	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

The conference makes the assessments, the stewards apportion them. They may be out of proportion, but with lack of data as to changes, formation of new charges and salaries paid last year, we did the best we could. Let us study the whole table so that we may intelligently propose such readjustments, for next year, as will be more equitable, if possible. The following was adopted as the motto of the district: "A Revival in every charge; a Sunday School whenever possible; collections in full" J. E. CUNNINGHAM, P. E.

W. T. REEVES, Secretary

Oxford, Jan. 16th, 1912.

Feb. 16, 1912 "We are not able to make any positive statement in regard to the general state or condition of the church as circumstances have been such that we have not been able to meet all of the appointments and have had small congregations so far on account of bad weather; but so far as we are able to find out, it is only tolerably good, have dismissed one by certificate Mrs. Maud McKinney have had one death Mary E. Rye."

—Respt. Sub.
L.T. Sargent

May 19, 1912 Quarterly report question: "Is our religious literature circulated and read?" Our pastor emphatically stated his reply: "It 'tis NOT."

—L. T. Sargent

First Quarter, 1913 "Since the spiritual state of the church is the only index as to what it is and may be doing in the Lord's work, we are glad to know that we have some real Christians on this charge. Some who walk and talk daily with the Lord. However it is evident that we are in special need of a genuine revival at every church. Let us work and pray to this end. We have lost by death Mrs.____Thompson and Mrs. ____Pruitte has removed her membership to Amory."

—Respectfully submitted,
A. S. Brisco P.C.

Quar. state of church 1st Quar 1913

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A.S. Brisco P.C.

Dec. 6, 1925 "Building Parsonage discussion...was decided by Conference to build Parsonage on church property...Epworth League reported very active and in a campaign for the relief of the poor...doing active and regular work."

—W. L. Pearson

March 7, 1926 In reply to the question "What is the church doing for the relief of the poor?" "Leaguers doing regular and active work. Many new members and all at work."

—W. L. Pearson

The Epworth League was for the young people of the church. There were both a Senior and a Junior Division; today it is called the United Methodist Youth Fellowship (UMYF).

The parsonage discussed in the December 1925, report was built in 1926. It was a white, five room, frame house.

Photo taken in 2004

March 7, 1926 "...Payments of $10 each month on a church piano." In answer to question 12 on the form: "Can the church here extend its work?" The reply: "Yes- voted to start a Flying Squadron and visit Sunday Schools that do not meet regular."

—W. L. Pearson

There was never any mention as to what the Flying Squadron was or what it did. It was never mentioned again.

Jan. 4, 1927 "Total enrollment in Sunday School is 210. We have 3 Epworth Leagues with a total of 100 members. There were 60 professions of faith since last year. We have 3 church buildings valued at $6,000. One parsonage valued at $2,500."

—W. L. Pearson

These three church buildings were the churches of Smithville, Antioch (Hatley), and New Bethel (Turon).

In the Quarterly report of August 16, 1928, the money given for the support of the preacher in charge was $980. This amount was probably a yearly assessment.

Dec. 12, 1929 "Visited in 34 homes, preached 11 times, 3 burial services, Traveled over 600 miles. Read three books: one on missions, denominations, English, read the daily paper. Took 5 meals out, several meals of good ribs, sausage the people sent in. Also a good pounding the people gave. I think we are going (to) have (a) good year."

—T. W. Smallwood

The Stock Market Crash had just taken place on Wall Street, but the beginnings of the Great Depression had little effect on the rural South. It wasn't until later, in the mid 1930's, that the people looked back in remembrance and realized the depth of their economic situation. The rural South was agricultural; farms produced most of what was needed; people swapped or bartered with their neighbors or did without. "Everyone was poor then; we just didn't notice how poor."

Dec. 15, 1930 "605 members up from 494 the last year, 20 professions of faith, 111 by certificate or otherwise, 20 removed by death or otherwise...5 church buildings valued at $9,250."

—T. W. Smallwood

Aug. 29, 1931 "Dear Brethren: Considering the time and conditions generally, our lives have not been broken and the spiritual condition of the charge on the whole is very good. I am sorry to say our Conference Collections are in bad shape at this time. I hope we will be able to make a creditable showing before the year closes."

—Very kindly yours,
T. W. Smallwood

$1,236 had been apportioned for the preacher's annual salary but reports showed that only $884 were actually paid.

The May, 1931 report is inserted here out of order to show the effect the nation's economy had even on small organizations like the Women's Missionary Society.

May 29, 1931 "Sunday School at every church on the charge—all doing very constructive work. I think the Sunday Schools are doing deep spiritual work. In their organization they may not meet all the requirements of S.S. work, but what they are doing is very good. We have given the children the very best instruction that we knew how and have won some of their love and admiration and have been won by them. Our Missionary work with the Women's Missionary Societies is growing all the time and has made progress on all lines. We have three Women's Societies on the charge."

—Written by your pastor,
T. W. Smallwood

April 5, 1932 "We have three Missionary Societies that meet regularly each week. Some of us benefitted very much by attending the Women's Annual Conference just closing in Amory, Mississippi. Have arranged for an Evangelistic revival at Smithville, beginning July 6. Led by Bro. Archie Stephens. And are planning a week's meeting at each of the other churches. With special help where we can secure any."

—T. W. Smallwood

The deepening Depression affected all aspects of the church but especially the relief work done by the women and the payments to the pastor's salary.

In the first quarter of 1932 the *Bulletin of Missionary News* reported the Women's Missionary Society of the North Mississippi Conference had given $7,918 for 1930, $6,694 for 1931, but only $4,803 for 1932.

On September 11, 1929 the pastor received $289.69 for the fourth quarter. On March 2, 1933 the pastor received $117.25 for the second quarter. On December 13, 1934 the pastor received only $96.85 for the first quarter.

Report No.2 on Christian Education: "I have stressed Christian Education with all my preaching ability, referring constantly to our Church Colleges. My experience and observation as pastor coming in touch with men and women who seem to be well trained, and yet having little regard and interest in the Church and its services...I am profoundly convinced if we are to have Church leadership, Church support and a world vision of the great Commission of the Master, it must come through Christian Education of our Church Colleges.

I am sorry to say that the questions to be answered in this report, such as S.S. Day, Educational Day, the Educational Collection, have been sadly neglected on account of this one thing...Christian Education. Our people as a whole are very much interested in Education and are educating the young people, but it is pitiful how indifferent some of them are towards the Church and its services. We have great school facilities in our own bounds to take care of the high school pupils. Some of the boys are attending A & M College at Starkville. Some of the girls are going to MSCW at Columbus. We have no one that I know of that is attending our own Church College. We have one young men called to preach, who intends to go to Millsaps College. We have not raised any money on this charge for Ministerial Education as till yet.

We propose to ever keep before our people the importance of Christian Education for a wise Church leadership."

—Kindly submitted.
T. W. Smallwood, Pastor

June 22, 1932 "We have observed S.S. Day in nearly all the churches and will in the rest of the churches. Have had College Day in one or two churches. We have one student at Millsaps and one at Grenada. We have four students in other colleges. As a whole the general state of the charge is as good as could be expected under present environments."

—Respectfully,
W. S. Selman, P.C.

By October of that same year the charge reported that they had three Vacation Bible Schools with good attendance at each and had touched the lives of nearly 100 children.

One pastor tried to put some order to the schedule of services by writing this reminder note:

Church Services

Smithville Church	1st Sunday 11o'clock and night
New Salem Church	1st Sunday 2:30o'clock
	3rd Sunday 9:30o'clock
New Bethel Church	4th Sunday 11o'clock and night
Antioch Church	2nd Sunday 11o'clock
Smithville Church	2nd Sunday night and 3rd Sunday night
Van Buren Church	3rd Sunday 11o'clock

This note was undated but was probably written in the early 1930's.

Third Quarterly Conference 1933 "We now have a parsonage cow. Smithville, Antioch, and New Bethel were the churches that had a part in raising the money to buy the cow, which is a valuable asset to the parsonage, a source of pleasure to the parsonage family."

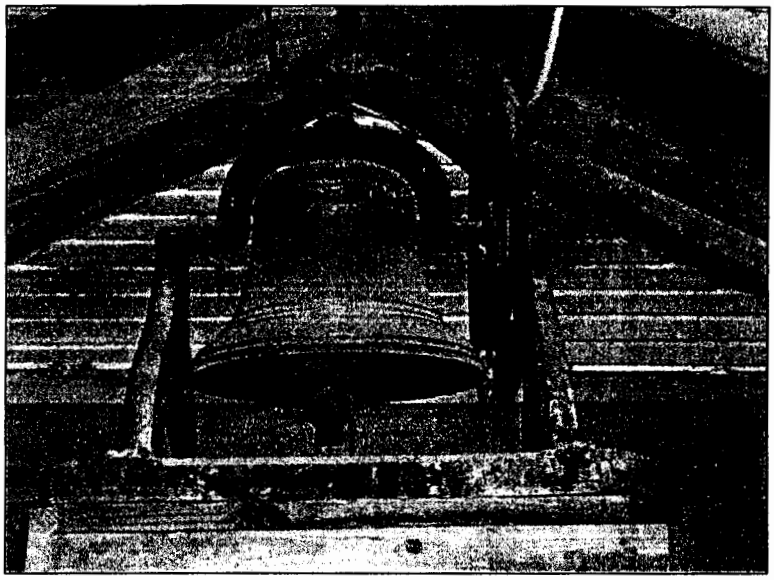
—J. V. Stewart

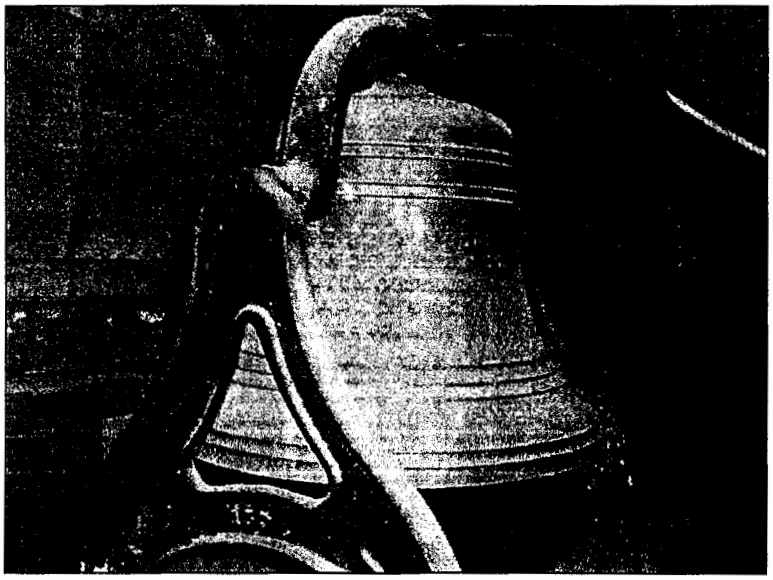
From 1885 to 1932 the work of the faithful in the Smithville church increased membership to the point where larger facilities were needed. The economic conditions of the 1930's favored adding onto the church instead of starting over completely and in 1933 the work began. A choir loft was added as well as classrooms on either side of it. Classrooms were added on either side at the front of the church with an entrance hall (vestibule) between them and a basement social hall was dug out from under the back of the church. The old church had consisted of one large room for all services and activities. The original four walls of that room now enclose the present day sanctuary from archway to archway. In 2004 we are worshiping within the same sanctuary as that of the 1885 church.

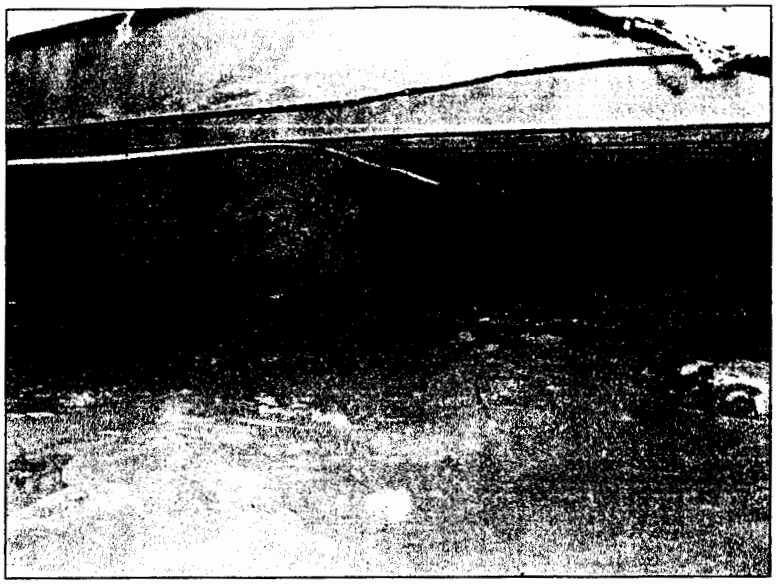
Further proof of the incorporation of the original church lies in the attic structures in the front and back of the church, as the original walls are still in place above us. Underneath us, the floor is still supported by the original native stone pillars, helped along with more modern brick columns. The church is still standing on its original foundations. Between the third and fourth rows of pews from the back of the church on the wooden floor is the evidence of the two doors and the original outside wall.

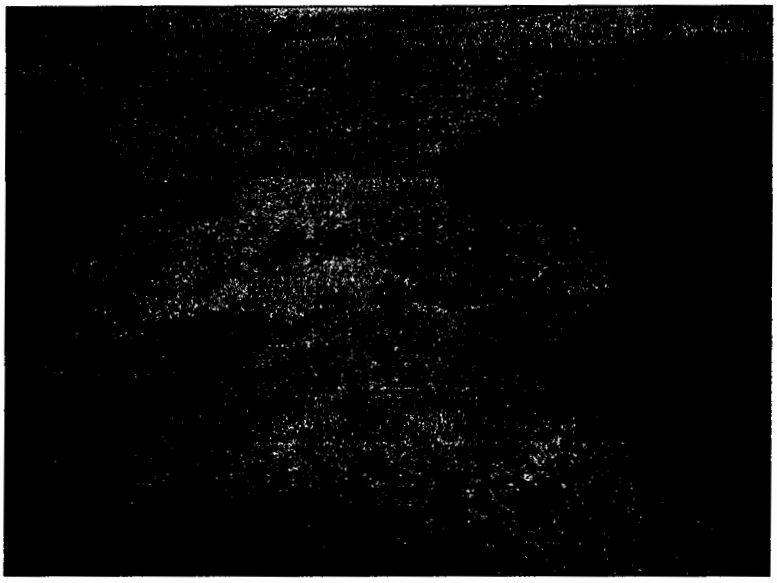
The belfry and the steeple were taken down as they were deemed too unstable to be reused. The bell was placed in the attic and its history from that point on until the 1960's is vague. There has been some mention in the "I Remember" section of the bell being rung sometimes on Sundays and special occasions, but information is unclear as to whether that ringing was a regular occurrence. When the present fellowship hall wing was added, the bell was placed in its attic, with a rope attached that ran across the rafters and down into the heater closet. Again on special occasions the bell could be rung to call the faithful to prayer and worship.

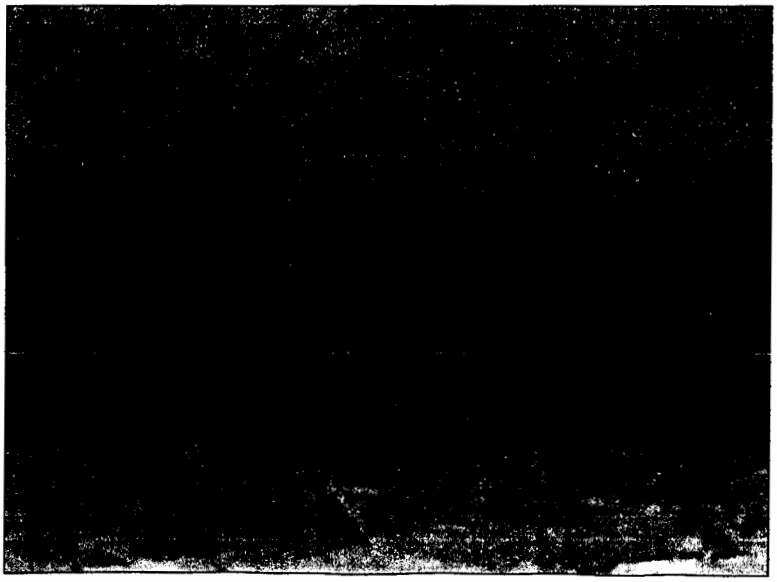
We can only wonder if our bell was pealed to celebrate the end of World War I and to declare victory on V-E Day in World War II.

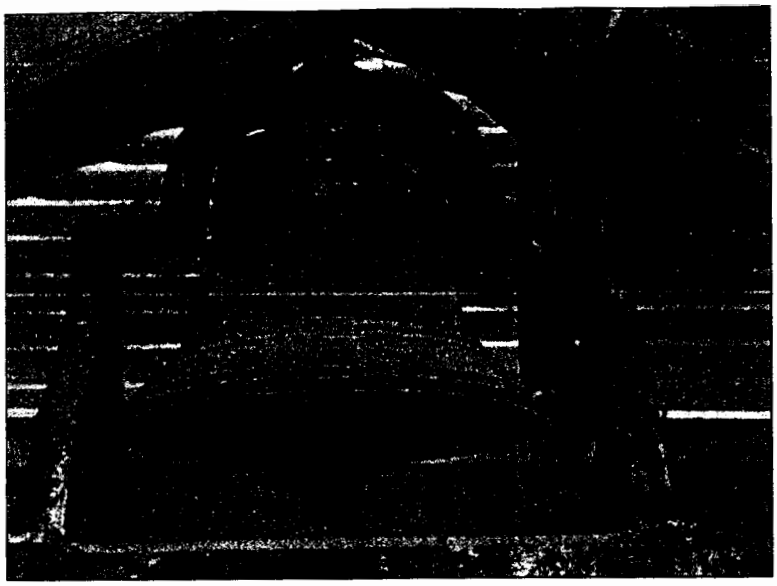


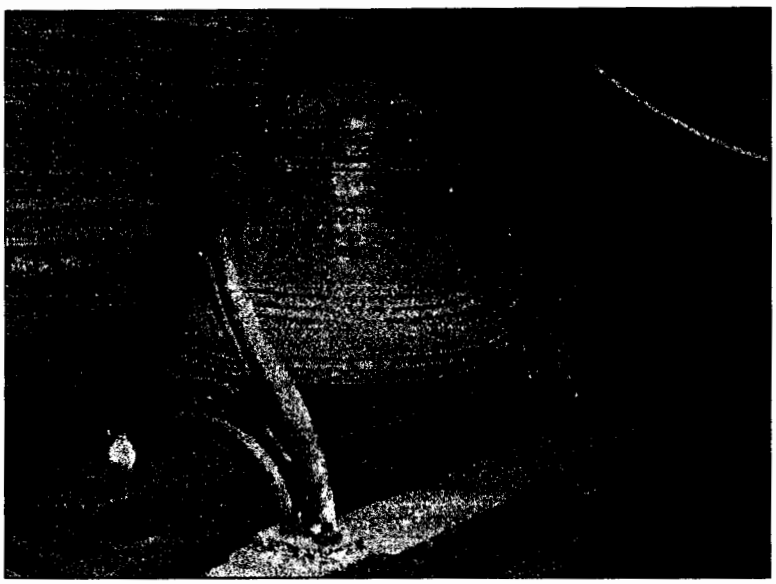












McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland, made the bell in 1887 for the Smithville Church. Records have either been lost or forgotten about the price and the subsequent shipping and placing of the bell in the first steeple. The foundry's records, too, have been lost to a fire in 1946. Our church bell is 19 ½ inches in diameter with a circumference of about 63 inches and is still on its original "swinging mount." When struck, the bell has a beautiful, deep tone.

The building committee members in 1933 were Norman V. Lyle, a town alderman when Smithville became a town instead of a village in 1929, a director for the Smithville Bank and one of the officers of the Smithville Power and Light; Mrs. Norman Lyle, A on L. Young, G.W. Cox, also one of the bank's directors; E. J. Goddard, Houston L. Gillespie, Mı Ruth Parish, R. G. Christian, one of the bank's directors, and also an officer of the Smithville Power and Light Company; Oscar C. Knight, C. G. Montgomery, and Phillip Shelton, whose bricklaying skills helped veneer the church.

First Quarterly Conference, 1933 "A new church building has been erected at Smithville. The first preaching service will be held in the new church next Sunday. This building will cost about $2,500. It is brick veneer with six Sunday School rooms and a pastor's study. It is a very beautiful building. And is a credit to Smithville Methodism. We expect to have the building clear of debt soon. We have built a nice barn on the parsonage property which was a much needed improvement."

—J. V. Stewart

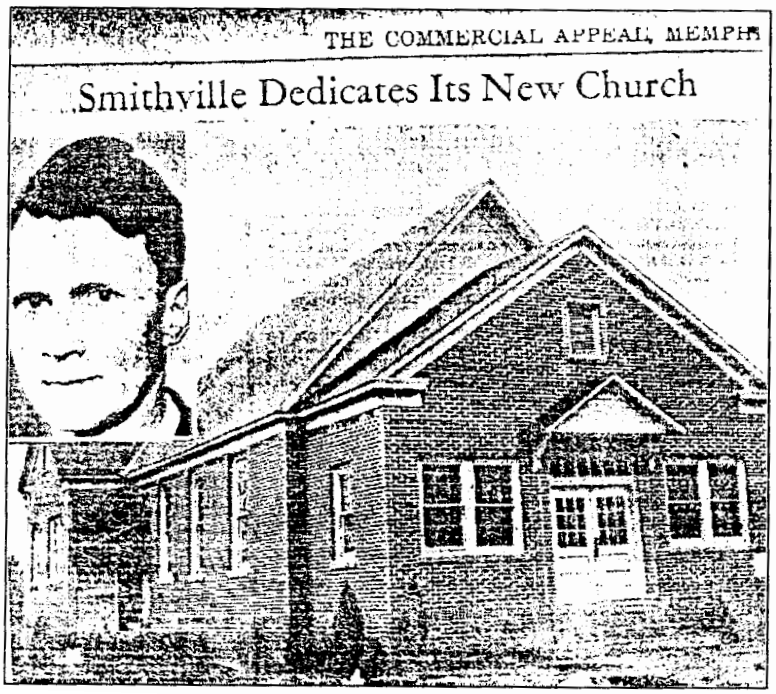
This note of Rev. Stewart's refers to our present church (2004), minus the building wing with the fellowship hall, the kitchen, and the other S.S. rooms. The actual price of the renovations came to $4,000. Information from a rough draft of a letter sent to the Board of Church Extension, Louisville, Kentucky: "We are prepared to make a report on our Church Building. We have raised our estimate on our work, having completely rebuilt the Church at a cost of about $4,000, of which we have raised $3875 and labor on floors will cost $125, the amount which had been granted by our Conference Board." The letter was prepared by N. V. Lyle, Board of Trustees.

"All our three Missionary Societies are doing good work. The Smithville Society gathered a splendid Thanksgiving Offering for the Orphans Home; the box was valued at $15. The young people's work is moving along very well. Our Smithville young people have not had a place to meet in some time but will begin their work soon."

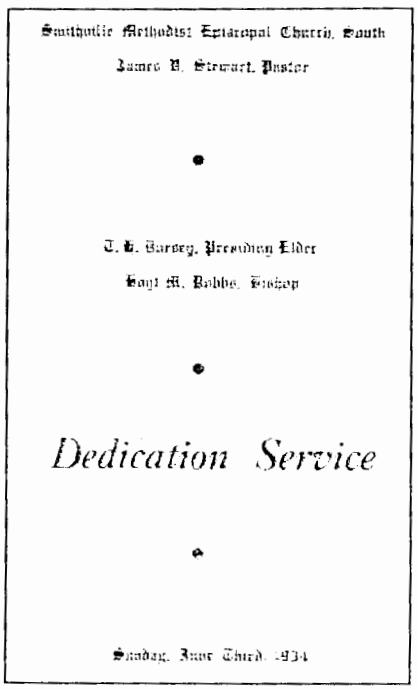
—J. V. Stewart

1933 (no other date given) "Our church building at Smithville has been finished and we hope to dedicate soon; we a expecting grea things of the congregation at Smithville since they have such splendid equipment fo ne carrying on of their w k."

—J. V. Stewart


THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MEMPH

Smithville Dedicates Its New Church


Smithville Methodist Episcopal Church, South

James V. Stewart, Pastor

T. H. Barney, Presiding Elder

Earl H. Babbs, Bishop

Dedication Service

Sunday, June Third, 1934

BUILDING COMMITTEE

R. G. Christian, Chairman
N. V. Llye, Secretary
P. Shelton
C. G. Montgomery
O. C. Knight
Mrs. N. V. Lyle
Mrs. Ruth Parish
A. L. Young
H. L. Gillespie
G. W. Cox
E. J. Goddard

STEWARDS

N. V. Lyle
R. G. Christian
C. G. Montgomery
M. C. Noe
Mrs. Ruth Parish
H. L. Gillespie

H. L. Gillespie, Supt. Sunday School

TRUSTEES

C. G. Montgomery
P. Shelton
R. G. Christian
N. V. Lyle
A. L. Young

PROGRAM

I.	Prelude	
II.	Invocation Sentence	
III.	Voluntary, Hymn 33	Choir
IV.	Hymn 10	Congregation
V.	Apostles Creed	
VI.	Prayer	Rev. T. H. Dorsey
VII.	Anthem, "Praise God in His Sanctuary."	
VIII.	Responsive Reading, 294	
IX.	Gloria Patri	
X.	Scripture	
XI.	Notices, Offering, Offertory	
XII.	Special Song	
XIII.	Sermon	Rev. J. A. George
XIV.	Dedication	Rev. T. H. Dorsey
XV.	Doxology.	
XVI.	Benediction	Rev. J. A. George

Third Quarterly Report 1934 "Our Dedication Service for the New Church was held at Smithville last Sunday; it was a splendid service and we are happy to know that Smithville has a building to suit their needs, free of debt."

—J. V. Stewart

By 1934 the question asked in one report was, "What is being done by Pastor and his assistants to put our Christian literature into all homes of this charge?" The reply: "Sought to interest people in the *Advocate.*"

—J. V. Stewart

Over the long span of years in the Methodist Church, there have been many *Advocate* newspapers, from Nashville, New Orleans, Alabama, and now Mississippi. For many years the New Orleans paper and the Nashville paper were in stiff competition with each other; each published news and events that took place over the area of the Southern states, the Mobile, Memphis, North Mississippi and the Mississippi Conferences. One story, told in the April 16th, 1870 edition of the New Orleans *Christian Advocate*, happened here in our church.

"At the village of Smithville a certain preacher was 'exhorting' and placed his watch on the pulpit in front of him. A young man in the congregation took out of his pocket a 'double-cased watch, opened it, and then closed it with a smart click.' The preacher, addressing him, said, 'Young man, it wants just 30 minutes of 8 o'clock, and if you wish to know the time again, I have it here before me; just ask me and I will tell you.' An observer recorded that the click of the double-cased watch was not heard again during the service."

The Nashville (Tennessee) *Christian Advocate* was the central publication of the church, but the New Orleans (Louisiana) *Christian Advocate* had wider acceptance and became a 'special publication' to the Methodist Church. The North Mississippi Conference regarded the New Orleans paper "as a fixture, and...a very necessary one..." and recommended it to its members. By 1899 North Mississippi had 989 subscribers. In one edition in 1890 the New Orleans *Christian Advocate* reported: "The year 1890 was significant in the revival movement. From January to December spectacular revivals were held at...Fulton, Smithville, Aberdeen, Amory..."

Jan. 17, 1935 "On the charge there are 682 members, there are 5 church bldgs, valued at $13,500. No indebtedness One parsonage-furnishings and land- valued at $2,000. 3 Women's Missionary Societies with 24 members. The P.C. was paid $152.35 The Elder was paid $16.90...gave the parsonage a Christmas pounding which was greatly appreciated by the members of the parsonage family."

—J. V. Stewart

By way of explanation of the old-fashioned word "pounding": It was a time-honored custom in the South to give a newly married couple, new homeowners, and new pastors a "pounding" immediately after the special event. Each person would bring a pound of foodstuff, flour, cornmeal, butter, sugar, lard, etc. to supply the new pantry and provide sufficient staples for several meals. Some people brought sausages, pickles, sidemeat, and several times it was reported that the men of the family got a pound of nails or a pound of wheel grease.

On Friday night, March 8, 1935, the Smithville Adult Class presented "The Poor Married Man." a comedy starring the pastor, as the poor married man who seemed to have trouble adjusting to married life and a mother-in-law. The play featured other church members in various roles; Katherine Griffin, now Katherine Davis (Mrs. Wilbur) played one of the young college students. The program lists W. V. Griffin as the teacher of the Adult Class; Mrs. Davis says her father also had them perform the play at Turon Church. In addition to the synopsis and cast list, the program showcases some of the businesses of that time in Smithville and in nearby Amory, Hatley, and Turon.

[illegible]	AMORY HOTEL CAFE
[illegible] HOTEL	The [illegible] Government
[illegible]	L. E. [illegible]

"The Poor Married Man"

Presented by

[illegible] Dramatic Class

[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]	Barnett's
[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]	Chas. [illegible]
MILLER THEATRE	[illegible]
Pure Food Shop	E. E. HOGUE

L. E. DUNCAN	Harman-Lyle Hardware
A. L. YOUNG	R. T. JACKSON
Wright's Store	Gallerdo Bros.

B. C. HOSKILL	John Fitzpatrick
Johnson Kennedy	Statesville Lunch Room
[illegible]	QUEENS PLACE
[illegible]	[illegible]

G. L. WEAR	CRESCENT Drug Co.
[illegible]	E. L. Brasfield
THE BLACK CAT	Amory Beauty Shop

R. G. CHRISTIAN	[illegible]
[illegible] KNIGHT	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]

The time was 1935, the middle of the Great Depression. Rev. Stewart said of the congregation in response to Benevolent Giving,

"...we have made some progress, but much remains to be done; there are no finer or more loyal people to be found that some on the charge. The faithful have remained faithful and they are striving to take care of all the Kingdom work. They are responding in a heroic way."

—J. V. Stewart

April 3, 1936 "To give a general view of the charge as it really exists would present two pictures—one dark, the other bright. The Dark Picture...We have 570 names on our church rolls and I am safe in saying that 50% of this number are not engaged in any of the activities of the Church. The Bright Picture...Despite the severe winter and the general epidemic of flu, the church has gone forward. The attendance at all the services has been small but a fine spirit of co-operation has been prevalent..."

—G. A. Baker

Sept. 27, 1936 "Taking all things into consideration we have had a very good year. I have never labored under as many disadvantages as we have had this year. Namely: a very severe winter, an epidemic of flu, infantile paralysis, and All-Day Singings. Two revivals were postponed on account of infantile paralysis. 19 new members received during the year. We have lost 119 by death and otherwise."

—G. A. Baker

Flu epidemics were cause for great panic as many people remembered the Great Flu Epidemic after World War I that had devastated much of the United States. Many thousands of people died in the USA during 1918-1920; many hundreds of thousands died world wide. Not many families were left unaffected. Antibiotics that would have brought a quick cure were not discovered until WWII. Infantile paralysis was also a disease that was feared, even up to the 1950's and the advent of the Salk and Sabin vaccines.

June 26, 1938 "Our Missionary Society at Smithville is second to none; we could not do without it."

—W. C. Mattox

The women's organizations have had many names. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, they were called the Women's Missionary Society. In the Methodist Church, 1939-1968, they were called the Women's Society of Christian Service. In the United Methodist Church today they are called the United Methodist Women. Records in the denomination indicate that there was organized women's work in the North Mississippi Conference as early as 1891. There were no specific, written records to be found about the early work of the women of our church, but we can be sure that the women gathered together, not only for mission work and study, but to serve as stewards and committee members. Many quarterly reports of the pastors have made reference to the "great work of the women" but, unfortunately for our history, the pastors did not specify what the women did.

There is a charter certificate for the WSCS, dated Oct. 8, 1968 that lists the following:

President- Mrs. K. D. Leech Vice-President- Mrs. John R. Nabors
Secretary- Mrs. J. B .Alinder Treasurer- Mrs. O. C. Knight
Comm. On Nominations Chair- Mrs. J. R .Nabors
Christian Social Relations Chair- Mrs. Frank Comer
Missionary Education Chair- Mrs. Curtis Knight
Spiritual Growth Chair- Mrs. W. T. Dexter

In 1984 the United Methodist Women contributed to foreign missions, the Methodist Children's Home in Jackson, the "Methodist Hour"and delivered Christmas baskets to the needy and shut- ins in the community.

This information is all we have recorded on our Women's Missionary Societies.

When the church was still the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, this question was asked on the pastor's reporting form for Question 14: "Has the sermon on World Peace and the evils of war and those attendant upon compulsory military training been preached?" There was no answer, neither was there a date on the form. Probably this question appeared in the mid-to-late 1930's, for the turmoil in Europe had begun to lead to secret alliances and pacts among nations, and America was slowly being drawn into the worldwide conflict of a World War, again.

In all the pastors' reports and church records on file in the Smithville United Methodist Church office, there is no mention of members who served in any of the wars nor is there any mention of the church's reaction to world events of the time. We can turn to outside sources for this information, but it seems strange that there is nothing recorded in our church papers.

By the late 1930's and early 1940's the nation was faced with the grave danger of another global war. "During this period our General Conference suggested that each church have the names of the (church members who served) displayed in some way in the church." We believe our "Honor Roll" on the wall in the present fellowship hall was done in response to the Conference suggestion. Since men entered service over a period of years, their names were added in no particular order; no rank or other information was given. The names listed are Robert Booker, Woodrow Shelton, Herschal Leech, Kenneth Griffin, Max Shotts, Frantz E. Moore, Doyle Knight, Herbert Stalnaker, Boyd Parrish, James V. Knight, Ralph H. Leech, Terrell Cox, Jr, Steve Rex Harmon, and Andy C. Leech.

Despite the grim news of European conflicts, one conflict here in the United States was happily settled.

"At the last session of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held in Birmingham, Alabama, from April 28-May 6,1938, the conference voted by a three-fourth majority in favor of unification" (of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church). From then on it would be called the Methodist Church in both the North and the South. Another name change would come in 1968 with further unification with our Christian brethren.

The phrase "minimum salary" came into Methodist literature in 1939. It had been in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church for a while as an "advisory" that the Cabinet appoint full- time ministers only to charges that would pay as much salary as the Conference designated. The Conference would set a minimum amount, an amount which the charge was obligated to pay. Often this salary could not be met during the year, and there were no funds in the Conference to pay the difference. An estimated salary for the pastor on the Smithville charge in 1941-1942 was $1,050.

As the charge was often remiss in fully funding the salary requirement, preachers were given produce from local gardens, eggs and chickens, and butter and milk from a neighbor's over- producing cow.

Rev. Sammy Washburn tells this story of Linda's great uncle, a Methodist minister. It seems that Rev. Albert Melton would always tie a chicken coop onto the back bumper of his car when he would go to visit his parishioners. Being short of money to pay the pastor, his church members were glad to pay in live chickens. Rev. Melton would then either eat the chickens or trade them for gasoline.

Dec. 14, 1947 "At this, the beginning of our third year on the charge, may I state that as I see it, the general state of the charge indicates the need of a general reconsideration on God's altar of the entire membership from the pulpit throughout every pew and home.

If this can happen even among the officials, we are about to see the beginning of the greatest year Smithville has had in years.

Brethren, will you meet your pastor at the altar of the churches, give God a chance with our lives, and see what good can be accomplished?"

—R. C. Mayo

The overlapping of dates of service for our ministers was caused by the North Mississippi Annual Conference being held in November or December. Appointments made at that time caused many ministers' families to move in the middle of the school year, a distinct disadvantage to all concerned. The November Annual Conference of 1948 changed the date of Annual Conference to the first part of June, and this change had been the rule since.

1948 or 1949 (no specific date given) "There has been a bath room installed at the parsonage for which we are Very Thankful."

—L. M. Wright

First Quarterly Conf. (Same time as above) "At one of our meetings with the Stewards of the charge, they decided to install water works in the parsonage, also a refrigerator and electric stove—All of which is done and the Wife is very happy to have this."

—L. M. Wright

Nov. 8, 1959 "We have lost by Death six of our faithful members which we regret but feel that they have passed from the Church Militant into the Church Triumphant. We have also lost seven of our faithful by transfer, which we also regret, but feel that our loss is a good gain for these other Methodist churches."

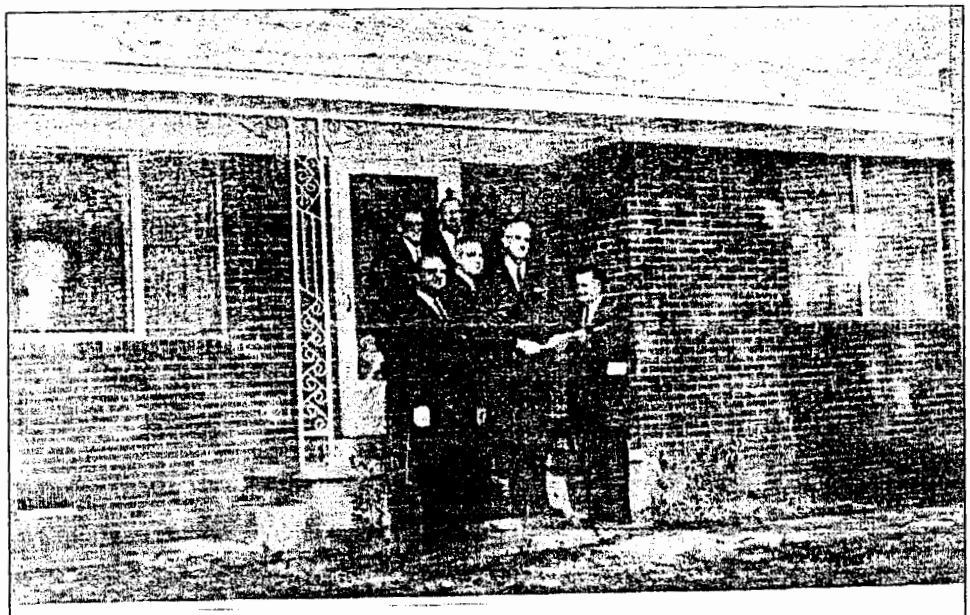
—G. J. Shumaker

SMITHVILLE
Methodist Parsonage
To be sold at PUBLIC AUCTION
Saturday Jan. 23, 2 P. M.

5 room house with bath and all bathroom fixtures including bath tub, laboratory, commode, wall cabinets, glass shelves kitchen sink, electric hot water heater, all butane heaters, all rugs and draperies in living room and dinning room. Also all venetian blinds on windows and doors.

The Board of Trustees have the right to reject any and all bids.

A new brick parsonage was begun in 1960 and dedicated in November of 1961. The old parsonage had been sold at public auction and was moved foot by foot, slow mile by slow mile, to its present location, next to a body shop and among other homes fronting Highway 25, going west into Amory from Smithville.



DEDICATE SMITHVILLE PARSONAGE — The group of men shown above are shown on the front steps of the new Smithville Methodist Charge parsonage which was formally dedicated Sunday by Bishop Marvin A. Franklin of Jackson, second from left on front row. They are looking over comparative figures of total construction cost and total contributions. From left to right they are: front row, Rev. G. J. Shumaker, who was pastor of the church during planning and the majority of construction; Bishop Franklin; Dr. W. L. Robinson, Tupelo District Superintendent; and N. C. Young, chairman of the parsonage building committee. Back row (same order): A. E. Leech, building committee member from Smithville; Royce Moore, representing the New Salem Church, and Rev. Doc Jeter, new pastor who succeeded Rev. Shumaker in July, 1960. —Photo by T. D. Harden

Bishop dedicates new Smithville parsonage

Bishop Marvin A. Franklin of Jackson formally dedicated the new Smithville Charge parsonage Sunday after he delivered the sermon at the 11 o'clock worship hour.

The Sunday service climaxed a revival meeting at the Smithville church which was conducted by Dr. W. L. Robinson, Tupelo District Superintendent of Methodist Churches.

N. C. Young of Antioch church at Hatley, chairman of the building committee, said the new parsonage cost approximately $8,000 when it was completed.

The new three bedroom brick veneer parsonage has been in the planning stage for a number of years and construction was completed last year, Young said.

Rev. Doc Jeter is pastor of Smithville Charge, succeeding the Rev. G. J. Shumaker in July of last year. The Rev. Shumaker was pastor during most of the planning and construction of the parsonage.

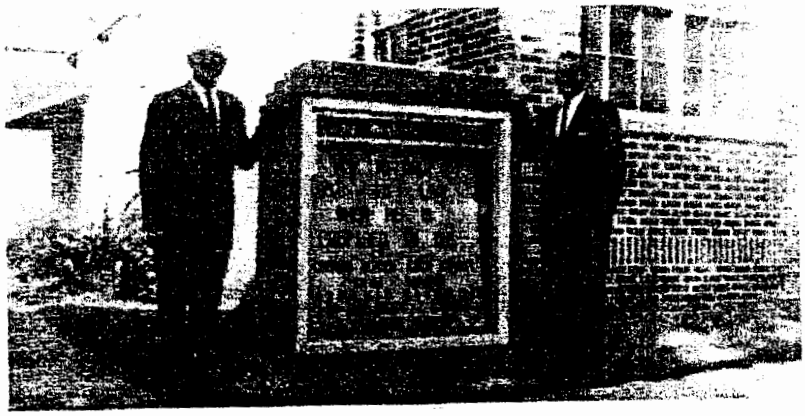
Rev. Jeter congratulated the former pastor, members of the Smithville Charge and other friends who helped in the planning and construction of the church parsonage.

Mrs. Russell Nabors is secretary-treasurer of the church and the building committee is composed of N. C. Young, Antioch, chairman; Coy Morrow, New Salem Church, A. D. Sallis, New Bethel Church, A. E. Leech and C. D. Guyton, Smithville church, building committee members.

DEDICATION SERVICE - Front (l-r): Dr. W.O. Robinson, Bishop Franklin and Rev. Doc Geter. Choir under the direction of Mrs. John Haley. Notice the windows in the back of the choir loft and the piano to the back left. It is believed that the pulpit shown here is the 1885 pulpit because of its short height.

From the *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* of December 18, 1963, we have a record of several events that had taken place in our church in the fall of that year.

New Bulletin Board For Smithville

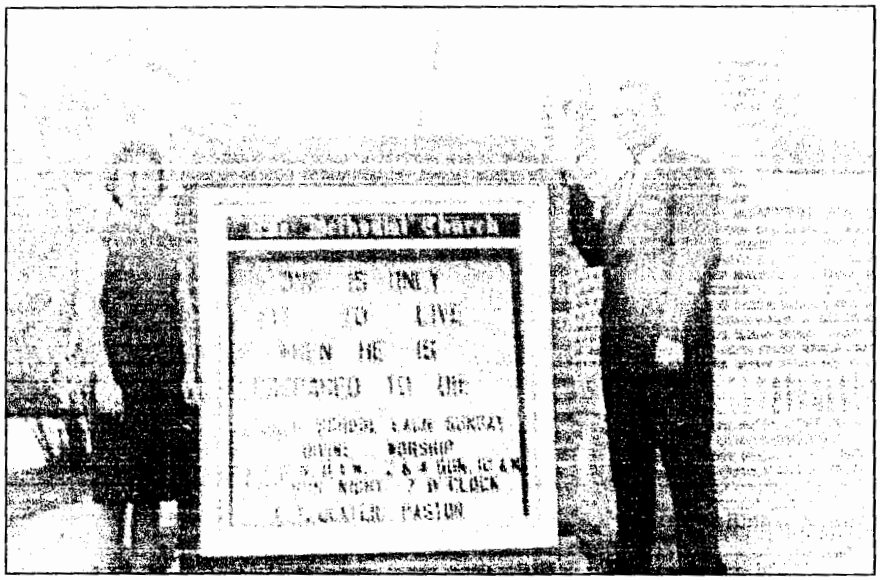


The Smithville Methodist Church has built a new Bulletin Board pictured above with Mr. Curtiss Knight standing at the left and the pastor, the Reverend W. T. Dexter, on the right. Most of the work was done by members of the church.

The members also met at the parsonage and remodeled an old worn-out garage into a very useful storage house. Recently the ladies of the church presented the church with a new communion set.

On a recent Sunday a special offering of $600 was received to apply on the church indebtedness. Sunday school attendance has been broken three times in the last six months.

The churches of the Smithville Charge sent 16 boxes to the Methodist Children's Home. The pastor was greatly surprised while holding a meeting on the Eupora Circuit when the church bus filled to capacity with members from Smithville came to hear him preach and to give their support to the evangelistic endeavor.



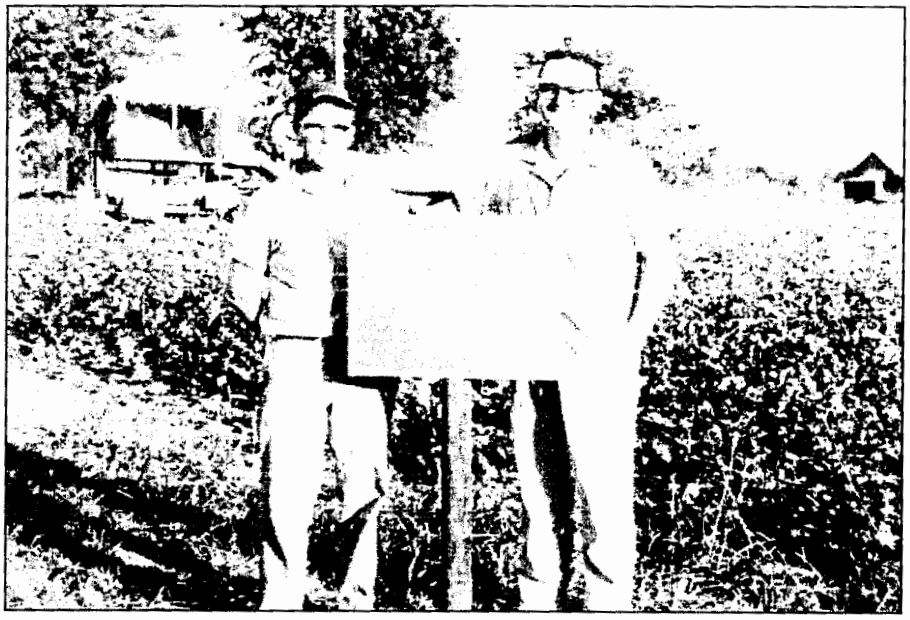
Rev. W.T. and Betty Dexter

From Betty Dexter (minister's wife): "I was blessed when I saw a big bulletin board between the church and the parsonage. I took off unnecessary announcements and made room for what I called 'soul food.' I changed (the messages) every Saturday afternoon. So many really enjoyed it and even the town people would drive by regularly to read the new message."

July 20, 1965 "Smithville Church has a beautiful Lord's Acre—7.2 acres of cotton, right in the heart of Smithville. The members have co-operated beautifully in this project."

—W. T. Dexter

"The Lord's Acre" was district wide; church members would work in the cotton fields; the use of the land would be donated; all funds from the sale of the crop would stay in the local charge. Betty Dexter supplies further information and pictures. "We thought of so many things we needed and wanted, but the preacher didn't want the church to be loaded down in debt to dampen the spirit. That's when he suggested a Lord's Acre to help in our expenses. We worked together, sweated together, drank from a common gallon jug of water and loved every minute of it. Jesse Cox even volunteered to pick it for us with his cotton picker if we would pick around the ends and edges by hand."



Jesse Cox (left) and Rev. Dexter

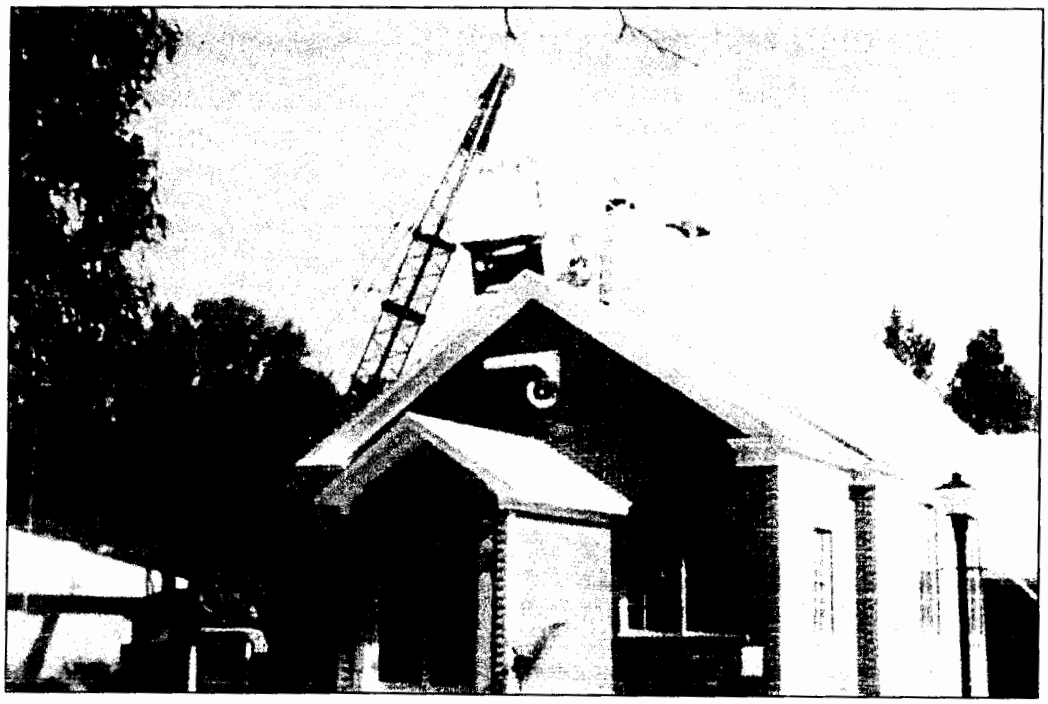
July 6, 1966 "We are just so grateful to be your parsonage family. And as Stanley has said, 'Daddy, it just won't do to tell the D.S. really how good these people are to you. He will be wanting to put one of the educated preachers over here.'"

—W. T. Dexter

As church attendance and membership grew and grew, there was a great need for an educational building and additional S.S. rooms. In 1966 a $22,000 building program was begun to enlarge the church. Prior to this 1966 expansion, the sanctuary had been enlarged by taking in the old vestibule and the S.S. rooms on either side of it. A new foyer had been built and new steps had been added, along with additional pews, pew cushions, and new, English-design light fixtures.

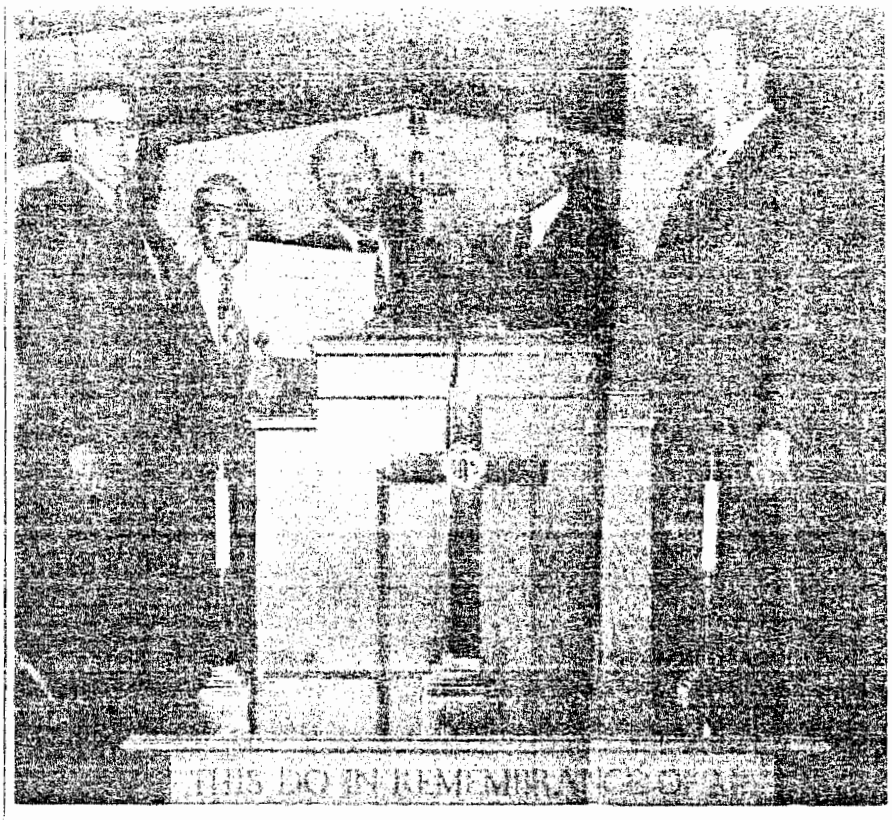
Several blueprints were submitted and reviewed, discussed and evaluated. The agreed-upon plan called for a "large fellowship hall, a large kitchen with a serving bar, beautiful, built-in cabinets, built -in stove eyes, covered with a vent, double ovens in the wall and a huge refrigerator plus double sinks...two restrooms and four large Sunday School rooms. This new addition opened into the sanctuary, making room for overflow crowds from time to time." There was also a door that led from the fellowship hall down into the basement.

For the first time since 1933 the church was to have a steeple again. Betty Dexter tells this interesting story: "The company I ordered from called the two pieces a cupola and a spire. I had the money (donated) in no time, and before we realized it, a huge, long truck with a Texas tag pulled in and unloaded it on our church ground. They had told me via phone that (unloading) was all they would do. What could we do next? W. T. called Mr. Scribner at Darymple's in Amory to see if he could help us. He sent a crane and lifted the steeple in minutes. We were all so thankful."



In 1968 there came another great change in The Methodist Church worldwide as the Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church joined together to become The United Methodist Church, as it remains today.

In 1972 the building of the new wing was finished and the dedication was Sunday, March 5. The pastor then was Rev. H.W. Lay.



CHURCH OFFICIALS PRESENTED DEDICATION CETRIFICATE--Frank Comer (third from left), chairman of the Board of Church Trustees at Smithville United Methodist Church, is shown just after receiving the Certificate of Dedication for the church education building. Taking part in the dedication service Sunday morning were, left to right, the Reverend W. T. Dexter of West Point, former pastor under whose leadership the building was planned and constructed; the Reverend H. W. Lay, current pastor; Mr. Comer; Bishop E. J. Pendergrass of Jackson; and the Reverend W. F. Appleby, district superintendent.

-Photo by Bonnie Parham

Sunday, March 5, was the dedication of the new education building for members of Smithville United Methodist Church and their guests.

The occasion was the dedication of the lovely education building which boasts an attractive and convenient kitchen, a social hall, three seating Sunday School rooms, a nursery and two rest rooms.

Among the large number of visitors and guests present were Bishop and Mrs. E. J. Pendergrass of Jackson, the Reverend W. F. Appleby, district superintendent, and Mrs. Appleby of Tupelo, and the Reverend and Mrs. W. T. Dexter of West Point. Each of the ministers and the church pastor, the Reverend H. W. Lay, had a part in all the 11 a. m. service when the sermon was given by Bishop Pendergrass.

Immediately following the service, the four ministers took part on the program during which Bishop Pendergrass dedicated the education building.

The Reverend Dexter led in prayer after which the Reverend Appleby led the responsive reading. Appropriate passages of scripture were read by the Reverand Lay. Frank Comer, current chairman of the Board of Church Trustees, presented the building for dedication. Closing the service, Mrs. Robert Shelton rendered a solo, "Prayer for the Church".

A delicious meal was served in the social hall by ladies of the Church".

The Education Building was planned and constructed in 1966 under the inspiring leadership of the Reverand Dexter and Mrs. Dexter, who worked very hard, not only in promoting the construction of the building, but on projects to equip it with necessary furnishings.

Also deserving much credit, according to a church spokesman, is Owen Medley Jr., who as chairman of the building committee, spent many hours in planning and work. Mr. Medley, Frank Comer, Billy Leech, Dewey Hannon, and Robert Shelton.

The last payment on the building was made in October of 1971 under the leadership of the Reverend Lay, the current pastor.

The average monthly pension in 1977 for a retired preacher was $129.11, with many pastors receiving less. A pastor's widow received $89.70.

In 1979 Smithville had an annual budget of almost $16,000, supported by 207 members.

Jan. 4, 1984 In response to the question, "What is the greatest need of your church?" the answer was "...A real good, old-time, Holy Spirit revival. Our members need a good shot of the Holy Spirit right in the heart."

—B. P. Jackson

By December 31, 1984, the church building, furnishings, and land were estimated to be worth $115,000. The parsonage, furnishings, and land were valued at $58,000. At year's end there were 356 members on the combined rolls of the four churches.

Dec. 10, 1989 "Since June my life and Ministry have been richly blessed. My ministry to the members of the Smithville, Hatley, New Salem, and New Bethel congregations has been a very rewarding experience. It is my hope and prayer that the Lord continues to bless our ministry here on the Smithville Charge for many years."

—Yours in His service,
Bro. Sammy

Brother Sammy, his wife Linda, and their children, Missy, Joel, and Luke stayed with us for 12 wonderful years, the longest ever for any preacher on the Smithville Charge.

Dec. 1990 "An MYF has been started at Smithville and the attendance has been very good. There has been a Community Easter Sunrise Service. These have been our most significant accomplishments during the past year."

—Bro. Sammy

Dec. 10, 1991 "The people have worked together in our churches to accomplish an addition to the parsonage which is greatly appreciated by me and my family. A new dryer was installed the very next day after the old one wore out. The Charge has provided when we needed help and I thank the Lord for the blessing we have had this year."

—Bro. Sammy

By 1991 the pastor's salary was $21,408, with additional benefits of $900. There was a new roof on the church, the addition to the parsonage, and the large trees were cut in the parking lot to make way for an expanded, paved, parking area.

Dec. 6, 1995 "We have begun three new ministries on the charge. One for senior adults we call Mayflowers in which we take trips, have meals together, and also a good time of fellowship. Another for preschool thru 4th grade we call Sunflowers. This new program has caused excitement for our little ones that God has blessed us with. Our third new ministry was Operation Christmas Child. We were able to involve not only our charge but also the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Smithville High School and the Baptist Youth next door. With the success of this project we were able to send 167 shoe boxes filled with toys, books, soap, toothbrushes, and a lot of love to children in war-torn countries throughout the world. It is truly a blessing to see our people get excited about sharing love and, most importantly, Jesus Christ to others in our community and around the world."

—Bro. Sammy

Nov. 17, 1996 "Our ministry with children we call Sunflowers continues to grow. We have been able to reach families in our community because of the program. We also started a new group for children in the age group between our Sunflowers and MYF. They call themselves the Ragweeds (named themselves)."

—Bro. Sammy

In 1996 the church became involved in the "We Care" ministry, providing snacks and coffee to the ICU waiting rooms at North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo and at Gilmore Hospital in Amory. The church today continues this ministry.

Oct. 17, 1999 "We provided a thousand dollars for the ministry in Alaska at Christmas, and plans are underway to help again this year. At Smithville we have started a fund to buy a van for the church. We have many new faces in our services. We have had growth in our children's group with many of the parents starting to attend worship services and other activities of the church."

—Bro. Sammy

A fifteen passenger van was bought in 2000. It is in use by the MYF Youth and the Mayflowers.

Nov. 11, 2001 "This past Annual Conference I retired, but I requested a retirement appointment and received the Smithville Charge. My time on the charge has been spent getting to know the people and seeking to provide for their spiritual needs and offering pastoral leadership. My personal vision for ministry is to continue to serve God in my retirement years and to have the good health and mental capacity to accomplish this calling."

—R. T. Welch

In October of 2002 our pastor, Rev. Robert T. Welch, Jr went to be with the Lord . His sudden death left a large, vacant spot in the pulpit and in our hearts.

Rev. Ron Stephens was appointed to serve "as long as we needed him." The Smithville congregation enjoyed two great months under his pastorate.

In January of 2003 our present pastor, Darrell Sanderson, came to Smithville and the church continues to do the Lord's work under his leadership.

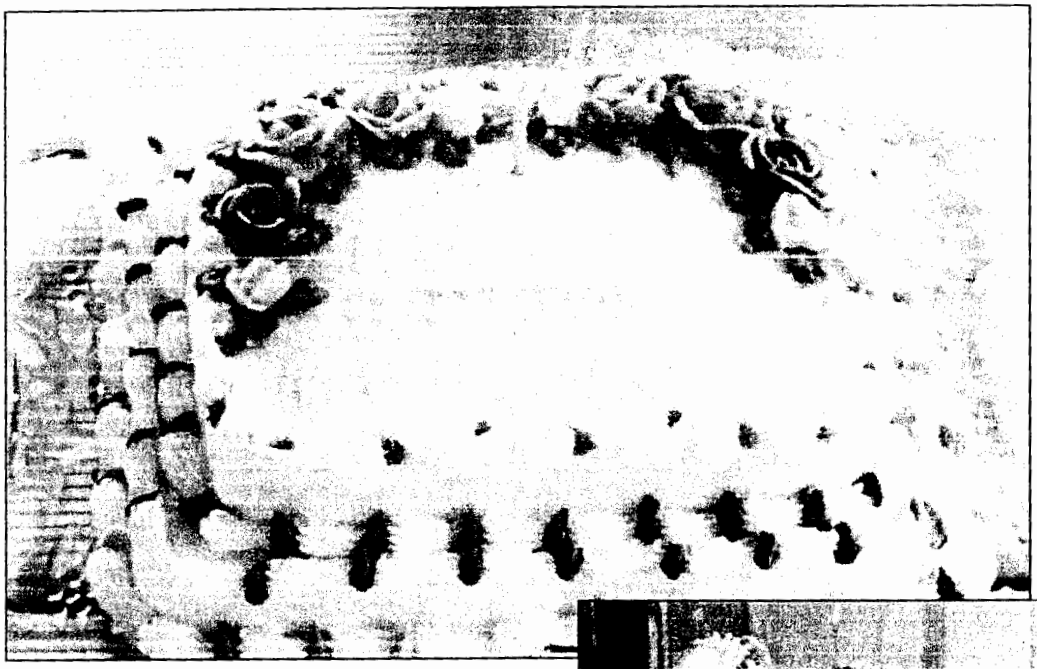
The first church van during Rev. W.T. Dexter's tenure. Shown are (front, l-r): Becky Rieves, Carol Leech, Kay Wardlaw, Kathy Wardlaw, Ronnie Coker, Jim Leech, Charlotte Jackson, Barbara Rieves, Owen Medley, Cherie Spigner, Joe Leech, three unknowns, and Myrna Guyton.

(Middle row, l-r): Dwain Rieves, Tommy Dendy, Gary Guyton, Gary Little, Dale Leech, Tim Jackson, Mary Ann Nabors, and John Comer.

(Back row, l-r): Terry Maxey, Freddie Dendy, Jerry Maxey, Harry Davis, Laura Leech, Doris Rieves, and Sue Rieves.

Our second church van, during Bro. Sammy's tenure. (Front Row, l-r): Susan Marshall, Clayton Corbitt, and Ryan Fikes.

(Back row, l-r): Kerri Edge, Megan Patterson, Danielle Hathcock, Kellen Davis, Heather Pruitt holding Kathryn Corbitt, Tori Fikes, Trey Roberts, and Kyle Davis.



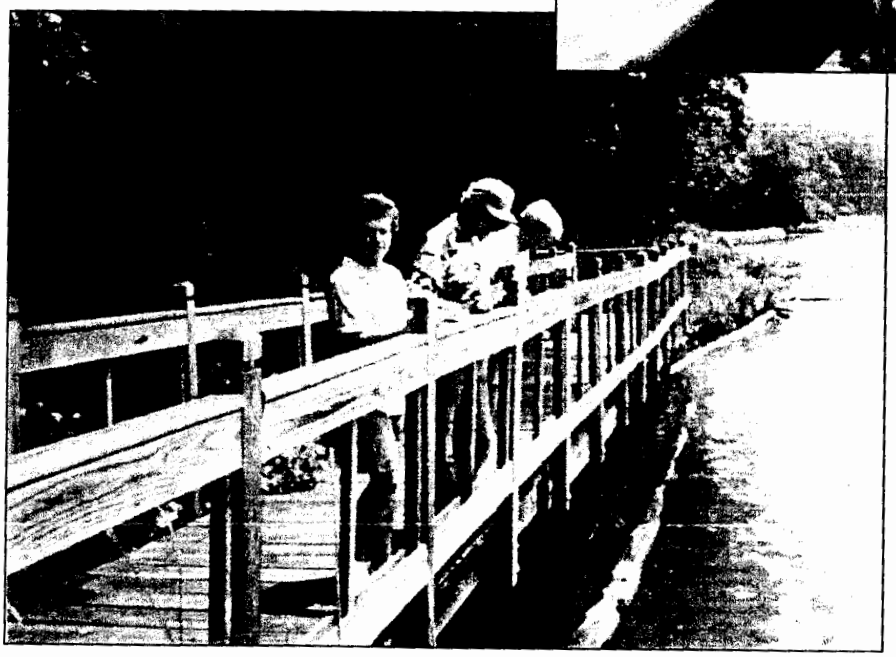
Ozell Collins, Rozell Cantrell and Ruby Maxey

Bro. Sammy, Penny Leech and Joel Davis

(Front row, l-r): Neecie Young, Vera Booth, Linda Washburn, and Kathleen Davis.

(Back row, l-r): Dick Morgan, Joel Davis, Katherine Davis, Gertrude Leech, and Louise Davis.

Gertrude Leech



Neecie Young, Joel Davis and Ann Enarson.

"I Remember..."

"Murl and I were married in an afternoon ceremony in the parsonage. This was in 1961 and Doc Jeter performed the ceremony."

—ROZELL CANTRELL

"I joined Smithville Methodist when I was 10 years old. It was in 1928 and we had a big tent revival at night in front of the church building. My mother wanted me to wait until we were in the actual church building, thinking that being inside would impress upon me more (the sacredness of joining) but I didn't wait. I moved away after high school at Smithville; my mother had died and my father and I later moved up north to live with my older brother. After I married in 1941, one of the first things I thought of was to transfer my membership. My husband and I became faithful members of York House Methodist Church in Wakeegan, Illinois."

—LYDIE DYER

"We were with Smithville (Smithville Charge) for a short time—one year and four months. We had some good times-some sad times there. We all came together for the September 11th, (2001) tragedy..We shared a lot of fellowship suppers. There are wonderful cooks in Smithville. I will always remember how "Great" everyone was to me when Bob died.

—CHARLOTTE WELCH

"I have many fond memories of our three years in Smithville. The people there we found to be loving and supportive. For example, Dewey Hannon, Sr. was fond of saying, "Preacher, friends are better than money." During those years my income was limited and I questioned the wisdom of his words. With the passing of time, I have come to believe the truth his words contained. Friends have spoken words of encouragement whenever I was discouraged, have embraced me whenever I was hurting, and they have renewed my faith whenever it was faltering The warmth of their smiles, the embrace in time of need, their conversations and their love has made me a wealthy man in terms of the wealth that really matters—someone who cares about us and shares our earthly journey. The Lord is good all the time.

I was the minister of Smithville Church and charge from June, 1975, to June, 1978. During that time my family consisted of my mother-in-law, Ruth Billings, who was on home dialysis, my wife Lin, my son, Franklin G. Burton, II, and my daughter, Christy Lin Burton. After moving to Water Valley, we had a second son, Micah W. Burton. The children are all grown now. The two older children have children. The youngest , Micah Wayne, is in law school at the University of Mississippi.

(Rev. Burton continues with the following story that took place here in our church.)

The Wedding and the Calico Cat

The wedding party was assembled about the altar of the church. The beautiful young bride and handsome young groom were standing in their appropriate places. The pews were filled. The greeting of the marriage service was almost completed. I had just reached the point where I said, "If anyone can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him speak now or else hereafter forever hold his peace." Just before that I saw a lady open the narthex glass double doors to enter. As she entered, a two-thirds-grown calico cat darted into the narthex. It did not stop but ran under the pews on the east side of the sanctuary.

As the cat hit the legs and feet of unsuspecting men and women, they reacted accordingly with shock and outburst. All the commotion excited the cat, who traveled the length of the pews on the east side of the church and then repeated his journey on the west side with something of the same excitement. Just as I said, "...speak now or forever hold their peace," the cat darted between the bride and groom through the rail. I swooped the cat up, exited the side door, traveled the length of the adjacent fellowship hall, opened the door, and unceremoniously dispensed the cat out the door.

I returned along the path I'd previously traveled toward the sanctuary. It was then that I realized there was a deafening silence. The flowers and the wedding party had prevented the congregation from seeing my encounter with the cat and had therefore drawn the conclusion that the preacher himself had objected to the wedding and had left.

When I resumed the ceremony, there was a sigh of relief from the congregation, and I realized what it must have appeared to the congregation. Conversation following the wedding confirmed this perception

The bride and groom, not to be upstaged by the calico cat, secured help from friends, retrieved the cat, and gave the critter a prominent place in their wedding pictures.

Somewhere out there a husband and wife are telling the story to their children of the day the calico cat interrupted their wedding. Now that's my memory of the cat and the wedding many years ago, and I'm sticking to it.

—REV. FRANK BURTON

"I remember once when a pastor's family was leaving and another family was coming in the next day. Several of us began cleaning the parsonage; some were putting down carpet and others were cleaning and dusting. I was helping clean the kitchen. Before we left (that night), I sprayed the inside of the oven. The next morning before going to work at Monroe Trousers, I went back to the parsonage and finished cleaning the oven. Another member from New Salem came and also finished some work she had been doing the night before."

—KATHERINE DAVIS
(MRS. WILBUR DAVIS)

"My parents were O. O. and Lillian Sheffield. I am now 70 years of age. (2003) I remember Everett Davis picking me up and bringing me to Sunday School when I was about 8 years old. I continued coming until I was 15. My mom, Lillian Sheffield, and my sister Betty would also come with us. We had Sunday School class in the basement of the church. There was also a youth group that met on Sunday night. One Sunday night we would meet at the Baptist Church and the next Sunday night we would meet at the Methodist Church and continue like that.

—EZRA IRENE
SHEFFIELD HUGHES

"I remember.....when the Smithville school first grade started in the church basement about 1935-1938. .....when the present parsonage was built and the old parsonage was sold to Mr. Condrey and was moved down on Hwy. 25 past Stafford's Body Shop.....when political rallies were held under the big shade trees in front of the church.....when the only entrance to the basement was where the choir robe closet is now and the ground behind the basement came up to the windows.....when the sanctuary was remodeled and the fellowship hall was added, along with the steeple on the roof, the trees were removed from the parking lot and the lot was paved.....when there were 5 churches on the Smithville Charge. Van Buren was the 5th one, located across Bull Mountain River in the Peaceful Valley Community.

I also remember that Mr. John Brewer would come early on Sunday mornings and build a fire in the two coal burning heaters in the front of the church and would have the church warm; then at 10 o'clock on the spot, he would ring the bell that was located in the attic under where the steeple is now."

—DICK COX

"I remember when we used to have our annual Halloween party and we could dress up and have running games! It was awesome! I was a pink Power Ranger one year."

—ALLISON WORD

Dot Cummings and Lydia Word

"Remembering a Halloween party...I dressed up as a clown. My suit was a man's suit, light brown with big, black dots on it. I word red tennis shoes, size 16, and a rainbow wig on my head. My face was really painted up and no one knew who I was until I spoke. Terry, my son, was dressed as Batman with black pants and cape. We had a cake walk, bobbing-for-apples booth and some games. I remember everyone had a good time."

—DOT CUMMINGS

"I remember when I joined the church. I think it was in 1933. It was in a tent revival in the church parking lot. I can remember sometimes having our Sunday School class in a car. This was the old church. One Sunday we had Appreciation Day honoring Mr. Jack Irvin. He meant so much to the church."

—LOUISE DAVIS

The Washburns remember the Smithville Charge:

The addition to the parsonage.
Service time change to a steady 9,10,11 o'clock. No swapping from 10 to 11 at Smithville.
Parking lot and removal of the big trees.
Youth trips and Orange shirts everywhere.
Hay rides, Liberty Land, ball games and Easter egg hunts.
Mayflower Birthday parties with guests from everywhere.
Seeing the birth of many babies and watching them grow into productive youth.
And watching Youth grow into productive adults.
The purchase of a church van.
Mayflower trips and Sunflower parties.
Sunflowers–the young ones, Mayflowers–the senior adults.
Bible Schools on all 3 floors and out in the yard.
Bro. Sammy falling down the basement steps and breaking his foot.
PPRC Christmas parties and the great gifts. (Good ole $ tree) The fun, food, and fellowship.
Sharing in the joy and sadness of being part of the Smithville Methodist Charge Family.
For the "happys" given
Missy being married in the church.
Joel and Luke turning a hamster loose in the church.
Sara Lynn Sligh being born while we were there.

—REV. SAMMY AND LINDA WASHBURN

(Front row, l-r): Unknown, Luke Washburn, and Emily Seals. (Back row, l-r): Linda Washburn, Jason Beasley, John Harris, Steven Vallarian, Joel Washburn, Kristie Sanderson, Valerie Williams, unknown, and Mandy Silas.

"I guess what I remember most is the friendliness of everyone. When I came as a visitor, I always felt most welcome, and now that I am sort of a permanent part of the congregation, the feeling of warmth and friendliness is even more evident. Bless you all.

—EVELYN NERTEWITZ

"I shall always remember one Sunday morning Bro. Dexter open the doors of the church for anyone. 'Pass Me Not' was the hymn sung for the invitation. Dewey, Sr. was sitting by me and Dewey, Jr. was in the choir. I don't think either knew the other one was going. They met at the altar with Bro. Dexter. They were later baptized in Bull Mountain River . The song sung there was 'Shall We Gather at the River?' That certainly is a sweet remembrance for a wife and mother to have."

—DOT HANNON
(MRS. DEWEY HANNON, SR.)

"Every fall there was a revival. The last two nights ended with an 'Altar Call' with the choir singing and the congregation praying. I must have been about 11 when I answered this call. Since Barbara and I usually did everything together, she joined me. She admits this was a 'follow June' step but later it became deeply spiritual. I'm not sure how much of a spiritual awakening I encountered, but the emotion of the hour and that deep sense of unrest in the pit of my stomach seemed to pull me toward the altar. I had no epiphany as many claim nor were there flashes of insight. Later I did experience a calmness that I had not felt prior to that moment. One of the more memorable sensations I felt was the cold water from the baptismal font trickling down my back as Bro. Elliot poured a handful of water over my head. As an eleven-year-old would, my thought was, 'There go my curls!' God understood because He has stayed with me for these many years.

I can remember three very strong Sunday School teachers during my young years...Audrey Knight, Connie Leech, and Barbara Taylor. Miss Audrey and Miss Connie used the books provided by the Conference, but Mrs. Taylor wrote her own lessons. She would change the topic of her lesson based on what she perceived to be the current need. This need was often tied directly to events at the school, which we all attended. Tom Taylor taught the 'Young Adults' class which evolved into the 'Adult Sunday School Class' as the members grew older. Another class was called the 'Old People's Class' and was taught for many years by Mrs. M. T. Cox. Grandma Shelton, Mrs. Noe-Fowler, and John Brewer were in this group.

I played the piano for the choir when Mrs. Alinder was away. My first attempt was when I was about 12 or 13. The chorus had a repeat line and I lost my place. Finally, Curtis Knight came to my rescue, stood behind me, and put his finger on the place where I was supposed to be, whispered for me to skip over to the appropriate note and keep going. I will never forget this because it kept me from melting into a teary mess and most people did not even know what happened.

Because of overcrowding at the elementary school south of town, the Methodist Church basement was the home of first graders for several years. My school year was 1940-41. Greene Sheffield was the high school principal and K. D. Leech was the principal of the elementary school. This particular school year was interesting because so many of the first graders were five-year-olds. Mrs. Thessel Sheffield was to teach the first grade but her good friend, Mrs. Rogers, was unable to resume her teaching career because there was no one to keep her five-year-old son, Robert Houk. Mrs. Sheffield told her to send him to her and he could start school. The problem was, the Rogers were renting the Grady Shelton house and word spread like wildfire that Robert Houk was going to begin school. Maurine said, 'If he goes, Eleanor June goes.' Ivy Brasfield said, 'If she goes, Norris goes.' The message made its rounds and by September, Mrs. Sheffield had at least six little ones who would not reach their sixth

birthday until spring. There were about 35 first graders in that class. I remember Barbara Wiggington, Helen Jackson, Virginia Dobbs, Norris Brasfield, Robert Houk Rogers, and, of course, me, Eleanor June. Can you imagine 35 five and six year olds in a basement prone to flooding and radical temperature changes?

I remember John Brewer. He attended church every Sunday of his life, walking in the cold, rain, or heat unless someone picked him up and brought him there. Most of the time, he was already at church because he made sure that the heaters were lit. I think that he was officially the janitor, but he did other things, like pass out the Sunday School books, make sure there were hymnals in the pews and water in the baptismal font. We rarely saw Charity, his wife. She was ill for a very long time before she died. I remember, at Thanksgiving and Christmas, the MYF would always take large baskets of food to them as our 'thank you' for Mr. Brewer's loyalty, dedication, and service to the church.

Church was the source of wonderful stories. Once, in the middle of his sermon, Bro. Wright's toddler son got loose from his mom and found his way to the pulpit where he began to pull on his father's trouser legs and babble something unintelligible. Bro. Wright did not miss a beat and continued with his sermon...even as young Don began to puddle on the floor at his feet. Mrs. Wright eased up and gathered a very wet Don and took him out, as he screamed loudly. No one made a sound and the sermon continued. Sundays were fun! Church was fun!"

—JUNE SHELTON WHITEHEAD
BARBARA SHELTON COLLUMS

"My memories of Smithville UMC are of the MYF. My brother Jerry and I began attending MYF when we were in high school in the late 50's. We were living in the Turon Community at that time. Louise Davis, Joe Ford, and Doris Leech were our leaders. Some who attended were Carl and Dale Weaver, Jacqueline Irvin Hathcock, Joyce Shelton, Lola and Mary Helen Gillespie, Junior Hannon, Annette Shoemaker, and Jerry and I. We met on Sunday night, sometimes with the New Salem MYF and sometimes with the Amory First MYF. We met in the church basement and had parties and New Year's Eve Watch nights.

We moved to Smithville in 1959 and I began to attend church and Sunday School at Smithville UMC. I remember how friendly many members were, especially Mr. Jack Irvin and Mr. Oscar Knight. I took part in many worship services directed by Louise Davis or Barbara Taylor. My Sunday School teacher was Miss Louise Davis. I moved my membership from Turon to Smithville in the early 60's.

I remember the Monroe County Adult Fellowship. It met at Smithville every two years. Under the leadership of Mrs. Barbara Taylor, we spent six months getting ready for it. She would prepare a program in which I always had a part. A person did not just read a part, for it had to be memorized. We always had a big meal. Mrs. Taylor constantly worried if we would have enough food, but if someone went away hungry, it was his own fault.

The Men's Club met on the first Sunday morning of each month at 7 AM. Someone always had to get up earlier and cook breakfast for us. We usually met with the men from Turon. We also met for a while with the men from Pierce Chapel Free Will Baptist. I remember many revivals, one of which was a Lay Witness Revival that took place during Bro. Inge Halbert's tenure.

Most of all I remember the people, especially those in my Sunday School Class for the last 35 years."

—JOEL DAVIS

"I served the church from 1982 to 1985. This was a very exciting time; in fact, three years of the most exciting ministry of my entire pastorate. There were many challenges—a time of renewal and a time of building up, a time of gaining strength, of meeting new people and learning how to say 'Smithville' (like the natives do) 'Smuffville..'

We arrived on a Tuesday; there was plenty of help there to unload the truck. The ladies of the church had supplied us with plenty of good food, not only for that day but for a couple of days. And we thoroughly enjoyed it. Right away we saw that Smithville was a community of fine, loving people. Mr. Jack Irvin was one of the first ones there to help us, along with Burt Sullivan. They were two of the faithful attendees. Anything that needed doing around the church, they were always there.

We needed to get a choir together for we had good voices and plenty of them in the congregation, but they were idle. So it wasn't long before we had a good choir put together.

One of the annual events we looked forward to was Halloween. Miss Louise Davis would dress up in her long, black robe and her pin-pointed black hat with her babbling stick and her washpots, with carbide smoke pouring out . She had a ritual that she performed during the time of Halloween. She made a perfect witch, but Miss Louise was a fine woman. She was more than a perfect witch; she was one of the best.

In addition to preparing about 45 food boxes at Christmas for the elderly and shut-ins, we also had a ministry to the nursing home. We would go on various Sundays, have a little service, make a birthday cake and punch and the people in the nursing home really did appreciate it.

In May of 1983 we held a Youth Revival with a young minister from Hickory Flat preaching each night from Friday to Sunday. At the end of the Sunday morning service 14 people came forward. The altar was filled. Some of the older people said, 'Bro. Jackson, we have never seen this before in Smithville!' A couple of Sundays later I baptized all that had joined on confession of faith. We held the baptism in Junior and Kay Hannon's backyard swimming pool, which was very elaborate but enclosed and private. We had a church service and we had the baptism. It was a great time for the church as I remember it.

They had just completed the Tenn-Tom Waterway and had built the lock there at Smithville. I wanted to have a baptism in the Tenn-Tom Waterway. They were launching boats, fishing, water skiing there, so I didn't think there would be a problem. It took three months to get permission from the Corps of Engineers. These three were probably the first three persons baptized in the Tenn-Tom Waterway. These were church members and had been baptized before but they wanted to be immersed. They were Everett Davis, Dot Hannon, and Ken Davis.

All in all the Smithville church was a time of growth, excitement, a time of renewal, a time I'll never forget. There were so many gracious people, people that I love with all my heart. Of course some of them have already gone on but there still may be a few that remember me when I was there and some of the things that I've spoken about.

God bless every one of you. I love you and you'll always have a special place in my heart. May the Good Lord lead you and guide you and keep you both now and forever. Amen.

—REV. B. P. JACKSON

(Davis Carothers was the compiler of most of the list of former pastors in the back of this book. He has shared this experience of putting together such a list.)

"Regarding the pastors...that was the result of a day-long trip to the Methodist Archives at Millsaps College, where I looked at Journals and Advocate reports from the earliest years of the Conferences (including the Memphis and Alabama conferences) that appointed circuit riders and pastors there and traced it all the way up to my appointment. It took some digging and I am fairly confident of the accuracy of the list based on the actual records I was able to find. ...I just remember it taking most of the day to dig back through the materials and transfer the information to yellow legal pads (oh the joys of laptops today!).

I did come across a brief mention of Smithville in the New Orleans Advocate that was somewhat amusing to me at the time because I had been 'chastised' by the PPR for occasionally going over the one hour time limit for the worship of the God of the Universe and Lord of All. One traveling elder in the late 1800's wrote about his experiences of traveling and preaching in various places. The one and only note he made of preaching in the church at Smithville was to tell of how, after he had preached for awhile, 'a dandy' in the front row made a theatrical production of pulling out his watch, holding it up to see the time, and then snapping it shut as loudly as possible...I told them that they apparently had a long history of concern about preaching times...

My list was developed for Smithville's 'first' (to the recollection of the members then) Homecoming Celebration which was preached by W. T. Dexter, the only pastor until that time that had served more than 3 - 4 years.

—DAVIS CAROTHERS

"When our District Superintendent, the Rev. Bill Jones, told us we were moving to Smithville, we could hardly wait. The Lord had so completely changed our lives when I was 29 and W. T. was 32 and we were anxious to tell the world of His Power, His Love, and His Peace.

The first thing I remember as we drove into Smithville was a utility pole in the middle of main street, but little did we know only a half block behind Main was a neat looking brick church and parsonage, very well groomed, nestled in huge oak trees. We were met by members and a kitchen full of good food. We were also given a Pounding large enough to fill up our shelves. After our very first night we were here, we knew the Lord had guided the move because we felt so much at home and so content.

The next six years were filled with blessings and excitement, and we were amazed at how the Lord was leading us one step at a time. W. T. and I never ran out front to lead—neither did we appoint committees to do the work. We simply got in the middle and we all moved together.

I was thrilled over the parsonage being next door to the church, because our doors were always open all the time to anyone in need—whether it be a child needing a band-aid or an adult coming by for counseling. Others didn't have to have a reason—they could come by for a cup of coffee and a piece of coconut cake or egg custard. Nothing was ever planned but anyone was always welcome. We worked almost day and night, but we were on call 24 hours a day.

W. T. preached 3 times every Sunday on our four point charge and I taught the Wednesday night Bible Study. I began with Genesis 1:1 and many who had never cared for the Old Testament fell in love with it. The number attending was amazing and several from our rural churches would come, too.

We never forgot that our main purpose for coming to Smithville was to preach and teach the Bible, witness and share the Gospel, pray for the Holy Spirit to take over, and watch for souls being saved. Most wanted to be immersed so we would go to Bull Mountain Creek to have a Baptizing. Many from the church would join us and we would pray and sing together. In the 1960's it was such a beautiful place. We had individuals and whole families joining our church and the Spirit would thrill our souls.

I remember the choir—one of the best! They all knew music and they loved to sing. W. T. told them he wanted them to sing the 'Hallelujah Chorus' when he died. They had several excellent leaders. We got an electric organ to go along with our new piano. I also remember that we had some of the best revival preachers that we could get—Bro. Jimmy Buskirk, Bro. Thomas Carruth, Bro. W. V. Stokes, Bro. Sale Lilly, Jr.—just to mention a few. Lives were changed; our crowds renewed.

One member, in particular, I'll never forget who was on our Smithville work, was Mr. John Brewer. He was a crippled man with an invalid wife. But he never missed a church service. He sat on the second pew on the left side and I sat beside him. He walked every where he went. He was a hard worker, raising chickens and tending a cow. The day we arrived at Smithville, Mr. Brewer brought us some milk and butter. One day the men of the church bonded together to add a new room to Mr. Brewer's humble house.

Manie Nabors had made the statement that if she ever had a preacher that would work, she would get him some new overalls. She heard about W. T. working and sweating so she sent him some overalls. W. T. could hardly wait to thank her. The next day he went by her house and when he went to the door, Varnice Nell answered the ring and told him Miss Manie was resting. Manie asked her who had come to the door and she didn't know him. 'Was it the new preacher?' 'Oh, No! It was some old man in overalls!'

My 92-year-old Grandmother (who raised me) died while we were at Smithville. We had brought her to see us at Smithville, so some of the church had met her. She was so precious. A large delegation from Smithville came to Iuka to the funeral. I appreciated that very much. I still have the funeral book with all the names.

W. T. loved the Smithville Church and the last funeral W. T. held was there. Several people asked him to come back for their funerals and he said, 'The Lord willing, I will be there.' It was a hot day and his black suit had so much Smithville make-up on it from the hugs.

On August 19, 2000, he went to sleep in his recliner and didn't wake up. But he had been talking about 'going home' for 3 months. I put on my bulletin board, 'Some call it Heaven; W.T. called it Home.'

I'm so thankful that on our way to Heaven, our paths went through Smithville."

—BETTY DEXTER

Rev. W.T. and Betty Dexter

"I remember...a choir loft filled and voices ringing out, being led by a petite, white-haired lady...Mrs. Cox, Jesse and Dick's mother. I remember...Mr. Tom Taylor, a godly man. A jolly man, kind-hearted, hard working, and honest to a fault. He taught Sunday School and I always looked forward to his class. He taught the Adult Class. I was supposed to be in a younger class, but I wanted to be in his class. He was a big man with a hearty appetite, who liked to have dessert first. But mostly what comes to mind is his humility as he came before the class to teach God's word."

—JANIE COKER

"Some of my first memories of Smithville United Methodist Church involve Sunday School. There were four of us in a group, all born in 1975. Stacey Hathcock, born May 26; Heather Lay (now Hathcote), born Oct. 15; myself, born Nov. 7; and Toby Collums, born Nov. 13. There people are my oldest friends. Stacey and I were especially close. Up until Stacey started first grade, we were planning on getting married. We even asked our parents one Sunday if we could stay after church and practice the wedding march. But when Stacey started kindergarten, he came to Sunday School and told me he had found a new girlfriend. I said that was okay; I would just take Toby to be my new boyfriend!

Sunday School was very important to me growing up. It didn't seem so then, but it does now. When I was in middle school and I think early junior high, I was in a class taught by Kathy Davis (Ken's Kathy, as we sometimes distinguish her from Cathy Carothers, the wife of the then-preacher, Davis Carothers, and my grandmother, Katherine Davis). I also remember being in this class with Christy and Jenny Leech and Toby Collums. We used to give Kathy fits. Either there would be an argument, usually between the Leech sisters, or we would ask her all kinds of really difficult religious questions. She was really great, though. Years later, after I'd had some experience with church youth as a youth director in Tupelo, I came back and apologized to Kathy for all the grief we had given her.

Mrs. Barbara Taylor taught the next class I remember being in. I believe this was in junior high and early high school. Mrs. Taylor was an institution at SUMC. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to be in a class taught by her. I'll never forget something she told us on several occasions: 'You are what you are in the dark.' It means that no matter what you show to the outside world, what you really are is how you act when you think no one can see you. I also remember her telling us that when she was still the girls' basketball coach at Smithville, she used to work on basketball plays during church! Mrs. Taylor was really a character.

A pet project of hers was the Monroe County Adult Fellowship. We had the fellowship at Smithville a couple of times as I remember it. I remember one time people were seater in the fellowship all and in the Sunday school rooms to eat. It was packed. I worked serving them. Another time I was a part of the music. First there was a trumpet trio that performed that included my sister Jennifer, Tim Coker, and I think, Kristie sims. I was part of a saxophone trio that consisted of Sharla Saylor (from St. Andrew's in Amory), Stacey, and myself.

After Mrs. Taylor quit teaching Sunday School, my mother, Kathleen Davis, took over. That was a really good class. We had Leigh Morrow and her future husband, Ben Buchanan, Mark Morrow, Jennifer, Stephen and Stacey Hathcock, Missy and Joel Washburn, Toby Collums, and myself. We had the best times. Not just out of class at parties and the like, but also in class. We would have some really good discussions in there.

The first preacher I remember is Eddie Roberts. I don't remember much about him except that he was very nice. I do have one memory from church at about this time. One Sunday, I had a watch and for some reason I kept dropping it. I think I was doing it on purpose. Then Daddy told me if I dropped

it again, I was getting a spanking. A few minutes later I dropped it, accidently, and Daddy took me to the nursery to give me a spanking. I don't know why this sticks out, but it does.

The next preacher we had was Bro. Jackson. I remember during children's church he showed us the index finger on his right hand. He told us he lost part of it when he was working at a sawmill. He also took up collection during children's church. We would put our money in a plastic loaf bread bank that had the outline of a fish around the coin slot. When we finally decided to do something with the money, they had to cut part of the bottom because there was no other way to get the money out.

Growing up, I remember Bro. H.W. Lay going to church with us. He and his wife sat a couple of rows behind us. Bro. Lay used to fill in for the preachers when they were away. He had been preacher at SUMC in the 60s, I think. He may have been the first person I ever heard with an accent, especially a British accent. He never lost it in all the time he was in America. He once said that his relatives in England thought he had an *American* accent! He and his wife were very sweet people.

One Saturday around this time, I remember selling hamburgers at the intersection across Hatley-Smithville Road from Coker's. I think this was to raise money for the youth. While we were there, a car passed by and stopped to ask for directions to Tremont. About an hour or so later, they came back around the same way, still lost!

I remember going to several years of Vacation Bible School. I don't remember much about what we learned, but I do remember snack time. The tastes of grape and cherry Kool-Aid still remind me of VBS. I do remember one year when I was very young making handprints in some kind of a blue mold. My mother still has it. It is hard to imagine that my hand was ever that small.

Being a little kid, I didn't pay much attention to the preacher's sermon, but I did pay attention to the choir. I remember Barbara Collums in the front row of the choir with her red head thrown back, singing her heart out to the Lord. I also remember Mr. Woodie Evans leading the choir and one Sunday I leaned out into the aisle and tried to help him lead by waving my finger in time to the music. I also remember Jacqueline Hathcock singing solos during the special music. She could really sing. I'm kind of sorry she didn't do it more. In later years, I remember Penny Leech being the leader of the choir. He had a distinctive baritone voice. It always added so much to our singing. When I visit now, I really miss it.

Starting in elementary school, I took piano lessons. Once I got good enough and had learned some hymns, I was asked to fill-in occasionally on the piano when Mrs. Becky Morrow was not there. Usually I was very nervous. It's one thing just to play a hymn; it's another to have to play it with people singing along.

After Bro. Jackson left, Bro. Davis Carothers was the pastor. After two older preachers, it was strange to have a young man with a wife and young children. When they first came to Smithville, there were three of them: Ryan, Melody and the newborn Jeremy. The first Sunday that he was the preacher, Davis' sermon was on Jesus walking on the water. When he got to the part when Peter began to lose faith and slip beneath the waves, Melody, who was about 3, cried out, 'Lord save me!' It was pretty funny. Early on Davis started a Wednesday night Bible study and my sister and I would babysit the Carothers' kids. They were a handful.

Davis' wife Cathy started an after-school program called Kid's Club. Once or twice an week, kids could come and sing songs, play games and do all kinds of activities. It wasn't just the church kids either. Some kids from the neighborhood and others who lived nearby came to Kid's Club. I think there were some kids who had never heard much, if anything, about Jesus, who were touched through this. A lot of time we would practice the Christmas play at Kid's Club. Cathy put on some major productions. The first one I remember was called, 'The Little Bell that Wouldn't Stop Ringing.' It was about a little bell on the first Christmas that was excited about Jesus being born that night. It was in this play that I had my first and only solo. I am not a good singer but this fit well because my part was that of a cranky, sullen bell. There was another play we did during the spring or summer. Christy Leech and I were two friends talking about Bible stories and the other kids would act them out. Perhaps the biggest production we did was called 'The Christmas Factory.' Again, I played a cranky, sullen character. The little girl who played the lead in the this play, Angel Moore, came to Kid's Club. I don't think her family went to church. I remember during the performance when she had her big solo. I looked out in the audience and I saw the look of pride and joy on her mother's face. Christy Leech had been mad that she hadn't gotten this lead part, but when I saw Angel's mother's face, I knew why Angel had gotten that part. God had done something wonderful and I was there to see it.

In 1986, Davis and Cathy arranged for Pockets the Clown to do VBS in June. He was a Christian clown who would combine music and balloons with the Gospel. Every day we had to learn a Bible verse and repeat it back to the person at the door the next day. Also each day, he would have an invitation where kids could come up front and give their hearts to the Lord. On the Thursday of that week, I and some others went up front to where Pocket's wife was. She helped us to pray in giving ourselves to God. That is something I will never forget.

The next year, or the year after, we had a carnival on the last day of VBS. All during the week, we could earn tickets in our group sessions, in class and in activities for doing and learning various things. At the carnival we could use these tickets to play games and ride rides. Another summer they had a program called S.O.A.R.: Summer Of Active Reading through the Bible. We could earn points for reading various Bible-based books and for reading Scripture. In the four years they were at Smithville, Davis and Cathy did a lot with the youth.

The night before moving day the year the Carothers left Smithville, there were a lot of us at the parsonage helping them pack. I remember that somehow my job ended up taking care of their new baby, Joel Andrew. I sat in their old rocker and rocked him until he fell asleep. Then I would stop. When he woke up again and started crying, I would begin to rock again and put him back to sleep. I'm not sure how long this went on; it seemed like quite a while.

The next day, we went back over to the parsonage to help the new preacher and his family move in. The Washburns had a daughter my age, Missy. She and I ended up moving in quilts. I don't remember moving a lot, but I remember talking a lot. I also remember their son Joel and my father Joel meeting. I think Joel W. claimed he had priority over their common name because his belt had the name on it.

The Washburns were at Smithville for 12 years. They became like family. Missy became like another sister, and Joel became like a younger brother for both my sister and myself. I remember when they were at Smithville, they were big Ole Miss fans. My sister had a maroon and white Ford Escort. In order to ride in it, Joel had to keep saying to himself that it was Smithville's colors.

The Washburns got the MYF active. We would meet on Sunday nights with the youth from New

Salem UMC. We had a lot of fun. One year we went to Eureka Springs to see the Passion Play. It wasn't just the youth, but adults and little kids too. That was a really great trip. The Passion Play was amazing. We also saw Christ of the Ozarks, the huge statue of Jesus like the one in Brazil.
The next Sunday at church, Drew Summerford, who was about five-years-old, told Kyle Davis, who was about four-years-old, 'Kyle, I saw Jesus!'

It was during Sammy's tenure that I preached my first sermon. The church was planning a youth-led worship service and Sammy asked me to preach since I had recently received a call to preach from God. I was very nervous at first, but once I began to play over it and ask God for His guidance, I began to get excited about sharing the Word with the church. I remember the youth had gotten bright orange MYF t-shirts to wear for the service. When I got up there, I was tempted to chant, 'Go Big Orange!'

After I finished college, I was living in Tupelo when Sammy finally left Smithville. I was there his last Sunday. My father was the lay leader and he told a story I'll never forget. He said that when his father was in the military, there was a man in his unit who would go around the camp picking up pieces of paper, looking at them, and then throwing them back down again. He did this to try to get discharged for being crazy. When they finally gave him a Section 8 and they handed him the piece of paper stating he was being discharged, he said, 'This is the piece of paper I've been looking for.' Then my father said, 'Friends, this isn't the day I've been looking for.' After 12 years, Sammy and Linda and their kids had become our friends and family. Every one of their children was able to finish high school at Smithville, even though the youngest had started out in the first grade.

One day in the church I'll never forget is my wedding day. It meant a lot to have my church family and friends there. When I was little, I used to look at the stained glass windows during church. One Sunday I discovered one pane looked like a duck pharaoh looking over his shoulder and waving goodbye. At some point I decided that when I got married, I would look at this pane as I walked down the aisle. A day or two before I got married, I realized I wouldn't be able to see this pane because of all the people. I told this story to Becky Vallarian, one of my high school teachers who was helping us decorate the church. She was also planning on taking pictures on the day of the wedding, so she took a picture of this pane for me to have in with my wedding pictures. This was a good thing because I forgot to look towards the window anyway!

Another memory I have of Smithville United Methodist Church is of a revival that was held one year when I was about eight-years-old. One of the preachers who spoke was a woman. It was the first female preacher I had ever seen, Rebecca Youngblood.

Something else that I don't remember but have been told about is my baptism. In the Methodist church, we don't usually re-baptize people, even when they they don't remember the event. Just because they don't remember doesn't mean that the baptism didn't happen or isn't binding. God remembers and that is all that counts. But children need to be told of their baptism day, to make it real for them. I was told at a young age about mine. I know that Rev. Frank Burton baptized me. I know that I was baptized with water from the Jordan River. Mrs. Burma West had gone to the Holy Land and brought back some water from the Jordan River for Mrs. Taylor. My parents borrowed some of this water for my sister to baptized with and then some for me. I've always thought this was really cool.

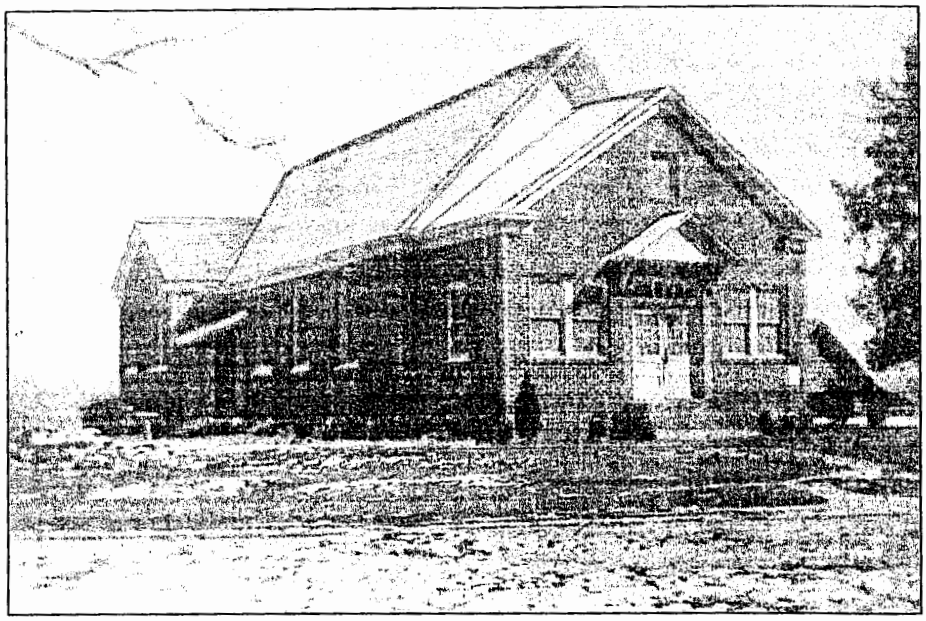
—ELIZABETH DAVIS SIMPSON

(This reminiscence of Burdine Young was found in a Sunday bulletin insert in the church files of Rev. Davis Carothers).

"My Grandpa used to lead singing at the Methodist church, and in those days I remember seeing more wagons than cars. I guess that would be 60 years ago.

Our ball field then was the lot in front of the church. Home plate was the front door. We used that old door for our backstopper, and eventually we broke the panel out. There was also this wonderful old apple tree just beyond the church. We used to try to knock home runs out there just for the excuse to grab some apples."

—BURDINE YOUNG



Courtesy of Kathleen Shelton Gorkowski

"My son Steven, and Joel Washburn were fascinated with Penny Leech's deep bass voice, especially when he would 'Amen' the songs, his voice resonating above all others in the choir. These two would often serve as offering stewards and at the altar, heads bowed for the singing of the Doxology, they would always glance sideways at each other with huge grins on their faces, waiting for Penny's 'Amen'."

—REBECCA VALLARIAN

Bits and Pieces of History

Our first pastor, John Gilmore, was born in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence.

Our charge name in the early-to-mid 1830's was the Bull Mountain Charge.

The first minister of recollection (served at Siloam), William L. Bonner, was born in1814 and died in 1877.

W. W. Woollard, our pastor in 1893, moved on to serve as clerical representative on the Committee of Appeals, according to the 1922 Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

The Smithville Baptist Church, our next-door neighbor, was established in 1850.

The earliest original document found in this research to mention a Smithville pastor was this marriage license. This certificate is displayed in the Amory Museum.
"This certifies that the Rite of Holy Matrimony was celebrated Between J. R. Thompson of Monroe County, Mississippi And Ella Johnson of Monroe County, Mississippi On May 5th, 1870 at the residence of J. A. Johnson by the Rev. J. T. M. Gregory of Smithville, Monroe County, Mississippi Witness J. E. Gossett Witness Emma Wadley"

In 1870 the North Mississippi Conference was organized and the Alabama and Memphis (Tenn.) Conferences, along with the Mississippi Conference, began to conform to state boundaries.

The McShane Foundry, maker of our church bell, is the only historic American bell foundry to have survived past the middle of the 20th century (1900's). Out of the 200 different bell-founders that are known to have worked in the USA during the past two centuries, only McShane Foundry and two others are still producing bells and chimes.

Rev. J. W. Peevy, J. W. Peavy, and J. W. Perry are the same person. Conference Journals give different spellings at different times, but the dates and places remain the same.

Some other name changes in this book will differ from those in earlier, written histories. The 2004 changes are the most accurate, based on intensive research and better record access.

Total membership numbers and other numerical quotations from pastors' reports are sometimes the combined total for the entire charge.

"On Sept. 20, 1816 the Chickasaw Indians ceded to the US, by the Treaty of the Chickasaw Council House, 408,000 acres, lying upon the eastern tributaries of the upper Tombigbee River. (land between the Tombigbee and Warrior Rivers) This area was erected into the large county of Monroe, Feb. 9, 1821, and nine years later, Jan. 30, 1830, the southern part was taken to form the county of Lowndes. After the Choctaw cession of 1830 and the Chickasaw Cession of 1832, the limits (boundaries) of these two counties were considerably extended, so as to include a part of those (two) cessions (that were) west of the Tombigbee (River)."

The Methodist Men's Organization have been active at various times in the church, supporting the Methodist Children's Home, the Haughton House, the Amory Humane Society, and giving generously to renovation funds for several church projects. The Methodist Men often met early on Sunday mornings, once a month, for devotionals, fellowship, and breakfast. One entry in their financial records of 1986 mentions the five dollars cash paid to Lena Mae (Evans) for making biscuits.

A Christmon (Christ Monogram) tree was begun in 2001 with several members making the white and gold ornaments which are interpretations of Christian symbols for Christ Jesus. Each Advent season members are welcome and encouraged to add to the tree.

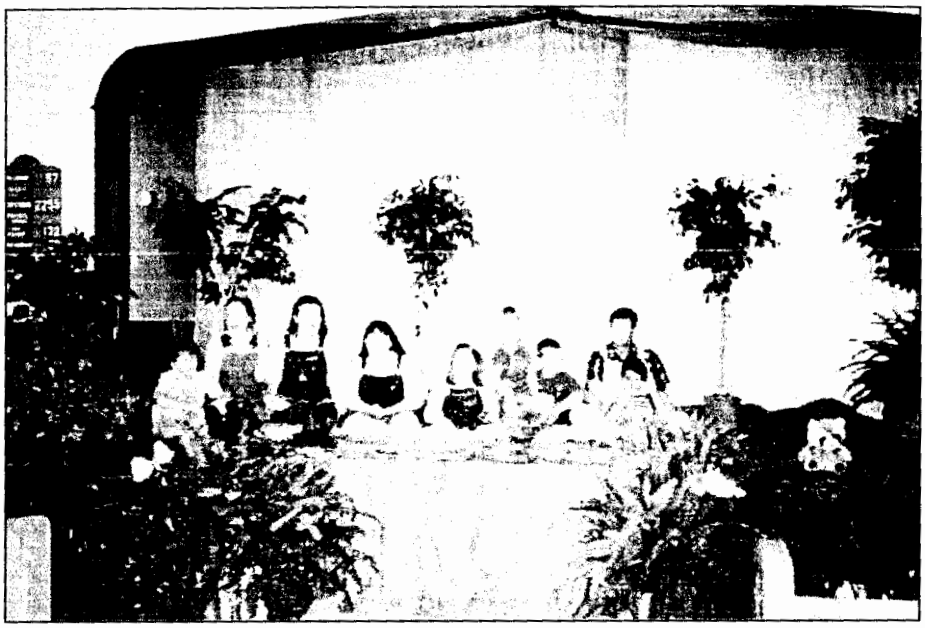
Beginning in our third century, we have a parsonage valued at $85,000 and a church building valued at $225,000.

Smithville has paid its Conference askings in full for the past several years.

The church budget for 2004 for the Smithville Church was $39,963.

On May 20, 2004, the Mississippi House of Representatives adjourned at the end of their day on motion of Representative J. B. Markham in memory of Mr. Darvin E. Henke. His widow, Mrs. Josie Henke, received a letter extending sympathy from William J. (Billy) McCoy, Speaker of the House.

One of the most delightful children's programs at SUMC was "Down By the Creekbank" It was performed in the sanctuary in 2003 .



Kellen Davis, Allison Word, Tory Fikes, Heather Pruitt, Sierra Walls, Halle Morrow, Matt Morrow, Bro. Darrell, and Ryan Fikes.

The Mississippi/Tennessee Sheriff and Peace Association presented Rev. W. T. Dexter, a former sherriff, with a small white school bus to be used in his ministry. It had "Jesus Is Lord" written across the back and was a very recognizable part of the Smithville Charge.

Joel Davis tells this story: "We (the Smithville Charge) had promised the District Superintendent that if he would re-appoint Bro. Dexter to another year at Smithville, we would gather enough money to send Bro. Dexter on a trip to the Holy Land. Promises were kept and Bro. Dexter went with the support of the entire charge."

The Mayflowers are still meeting for a fellowship meal and occasional trips in 2004.

The Adult Sunday School Class purchased a memorial brick for the Pathway of Honor entrance to the new Richard S. Hollis Women's Center, Gilmore Memorial Hospital, Amory, Mississippi.

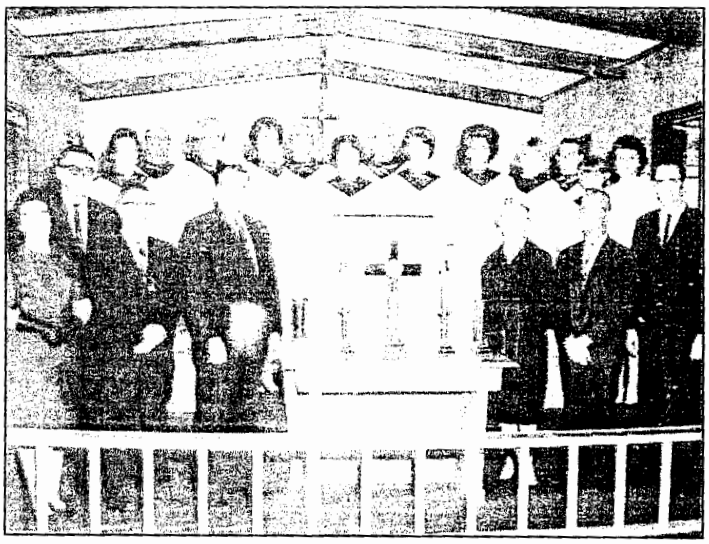
In 2004 Smithville UMC supports the Amory Food Pantry with monthly donations of food, the Monroe County Home for the Aged with "Christmas in July" gift baskets, and the elderly and shut-ins in the church and community with Christmas boxes of food and fruit.

Each month during one Sunday morning worship, SUMC recognizes congregational birthdays. Birthday celebrants come to the front of the church, place a contribution equal to their years in the church box, and the congregation sings "Happy Birthday, Dear Christian" to them. The money is used for the Christmas food boxes.

In 1999 the women of the church published volume II of the church cookbook, "SUMC Shares Recipes."

Each year, members of the church hold a holiday bazaar with proceeds going to the Mayflowers and the MYF.

In 1966, a dedication service was held at SUMC for the additions of new sanctuary items. The photo and article below from "The Mississippi Methodist Advocate" further explains.



(Front row, l-r): Sadie "Muzzie" Odom (Mrs. J.L.), Joe Ford, Dewey Hannon, Sr., Connie Leech (Mrs. K.D.), Dick Cox, and Everett Davis.

(Back row, l-r): Rev. W.T. Dexter, Geneva Sullivan (Mrs. Bert), Robert Shelton, Ruby Maxey (Mrs. Ferman), Maureen Shelton (Mrs. Robert), Curtis Knight, Laverne Guyton (Mrs. Dempsey), Oscar Knight, Jacquelin Irvin Hathcock (Mrs. Edwin), Kay Hannon (Mrs. Jr.), Laura Lee Leech, Dewey Hannon, Jr., Ann Comer Goodwin, and Betty Dexter (Mrs. W.T.).

A simple, but meaningful service of Dedication was held at the Smithville Methodist Church on Sunday afternoon, October 2.

The service began with the entire congregation singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy," followed by prayer. After the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" was sung by the Smithville Choir, Scripture was read and remarks made by the pastor, W. T. Dexter.

Mrs. Robert Shelton sang a solo, "Sunrise," followed by a meditation, "Thy Son Shall Build" by Betty Dexter. Memorial gifts were then presented to the church.

The pulpit, pulpit chairs and altar rail were presented in memory of Mrs. Terrell Cox, by her son, Richard. As representative of the choir, Mrs. Robert Shelton presented a brass bud vase which is placed on the organ each Sunday morning with a fresh rosebud in memory of Mrs. Cox, a choir member and director for 35 years.

A brass altar set was presented in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Kelly Davis by their son, Everett.

Mrs. K. D. Leech, Sr. presented a communion table and flower stands in memory of her son, Ralph Leech.

In memory of Mrs. Guy Ford, a pulpit Bible was presented by her son, Joe.

Dewey Hannon, president of the Young Adult Sunday School Class, presented a lectern in honor of their faithful teacher, Mr. Tom Taylor.

Mrs. J. L. Odom of Iuka presented a candlelighter to the church in honor of the faithfulness of one of their senior members, John Brewer.

After the gifts were accepted by the pastor, the choir closed the service by singing, "To God Be The Glory."

After the benediction refreshments were served in the new annex by Misses Melinda Tye, Glenda Powell, Patty Harper, Nova Lou Noe, Ann Sullivan, and Peggy Harper.

Some of our members in December of 1956. Notice the windows in the back of the choir loft. This was before the renovations in the early 1960s.

(Front row, l-r): Dempsey Guyton, Penny Leech, Joe Ford, Dick Cox, Tom Taylor, James Burrows, Arnie Weaver, and Dick Morgan.

(Second row, l-r): Lillian Gillespie, Laura Lee Leech, Patti Leech, Clifford Irvin, Laverne Guyton, Jodie Arlinder, Dot Burrows, Merline Knight, Maurine Shelton, Earline Nash, Marcelle Cantrell, Ramelle Morgan, Laverne Knight, Hilda Harmon, Louise Davis, and Addie Mae Weaver.

(Back row, l-r): James Knight, Arbie Maxey, Everett Davis, Barbara Taylor, Ruby Maxey, Sleepy Nash, Curtis Knight, and Robert Shelton.

MISSION JOURNEYS

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me..."

"...Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee? Or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee? Or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?"

"...Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Matthew 25: 35-45 RSV, KJV

JAMAICA

In 1997 our United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) group went to Kingston, Jamaica for two weeks. We worked mornings preparing the downstairs room of the tiny Ebenezer Methodist Church for more adequate meeting space. It was one large, open area in need of a sloped floor and an altar area. We, alongside the Jamaican church members, mixed and poured concrete, chipped away the square corners of concrete pillars to make them round, swept and cleaned, and hauled cement blocks, all the while trying to keep 50-60 children of all ages (from the housing projects next door) out of harm's way.

Respite from the heat and labors came in the upstairs, wooden sanctuary at noon as church members prepared wonderful Jamaican food and brought it to us each day. The church had no running water and the daily ritual of hand washing before meals took on a spiritual blessing as each one, Jamaican and American, took turns pouring water over the hands of another. We had been asked by the host pastor not to "bother" with the ghetto children, certainly not to share our break time snacks and drinks. It was especially sad at noon time to have to close the shutters upstairs so they would not see us eating lunch. All scraps were saved in a pail, though, to be fed to the members' dogs at home.

Afternoons were spent holding Bible Schools at three other Methodist churches around the capital city. Some churches were very needy and some were not, but the Spirit of Joy was in abundance at each. We rejoiced when several of the children found a closer relationship with the Lord.. As for those children of the projects...well, we women worked in shifts; some did manual labor while others played games and sang songs under the shade trees with the children.
There were close to 100 children by the end of our time there who came over the church walls as soon as they saw our van arrive in the mornings and stayed within arm's reach all day. Ebenezer Church had

limited resources and would not or could not invite these precious little ones to Sunday School or to church. This troubled our group very much and understanding the reasons behind this decision was difficult, but as invited workers from another country, we had to accept their ways.

Jamaican hospitality was wonderful and we met many committed Christians who loved the Lord and were prepared to do His work among the people on the island. One particular memory holds fast of helping the elderly caretaker of the church cemetery reset the broken tombstones and clean the graves. Some graves dated from the early 1700's and some of the graves were of early English missionaries. The Jamaican church members were amused at the fascination we showed over the discovery of the dates. The cemetery surrounded the church on two sides and was long neglected; the caretaker did what he was able but remained much discouraged by nightly vandalism and excessive littering. The cemetery was in the path of a shortcut from one street to another. We did manage to do considerable cleaning of the area by helping him every day. The day we had to say goodbye forever, he ran alongside the van, blowing kisses and God's blessings to us.

I thank God for the opportunity to serve Him those two weeks. I feel that I have received much more than I ever gave to Jamaica.

–REBECCA VALLARIAN

TEXAS and VIRGINIA

In 1995 I teamed up with Starkville First United Methodist associate pastor Rev. Bill Beavers in beginning two mission work teams. During spring break in March we took youth from the Wesley Foundation at MSU to Fort Worth, Texas. "Beautiful Feet," a ministry for the homeless in Fort Worth, reaches out to the homeless and needy of that city by opening the doors of their church for worship and food. On Sundays they send a bus to the "Projects," a housing project for the poor, to pick up the children and parents for Sunday School, worship, breakfast and lunch. We in mission help in all of these activities. Each day during the week, lunch is served for those who choose to come. Prior to the lunch one or more of the mission members would give a short devotional. Rev. Beavers is no longer at Starkville First, but the mission work is still carried on by that church.

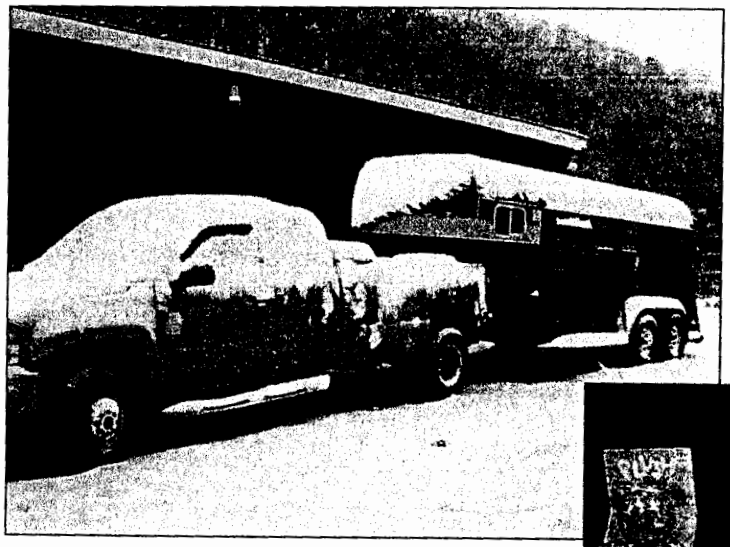
That same year we went to the small town of Nora in the mountains of southwest Virginia to do construction work as a mission project. In the early 1920's the mining companies from up north had discovered coal in those mountains. They quickly bought all of the mineral rights from the people living there and then hired them as workers in the mines. Over the years as manual labor was replaced by machinery, many workers lost their jobs. Having no other source of income, the people of Dickens County have become the poorest county in the United States.

We go to Binns Count Community Center there for a week's work. During the past 10 years, I have met many wonderful people there and developed many friendships. We usually work on houses that most areas of the country would think of as places from the past. Running water, inside bathrooms, and, in some places, even electricity are luxuries. This mission to the mountains is by far my favorite mission.

In 2003 I began another type of ministry there in Virginia. At Christmas we collect toys for the children and clothes for both the children and the adults. In the first year of this ministry, we collected toys for 275 children. There are 525 children in the community who receive gifts who would not be able to celebrate Christmas if not for the love and hard work of the people of Smithville UMC and other ministries like Starkville First.

These mission journeys have become a part of my life and I do not know what I would do if I could not fulfill my call to these missions.

—REV. DARRELL SANDERSON



SUMMER APPALACHIA MISSION

In July of 2004 we went to Binns Count Community Center in Nora, Virginia, to work on houses that were in need of repair. Andy, Lynda, and Coby White, Allison Word, Bro. Darrell Sanderson, Kyle, Kellen, and Kathy Davis were the mission crew from Smithville. We went with the group from Starkville First United Methodist, six men and one woman. Our friendships were strengthened as we shared nightly devotionals, songs and entertainments. One night when we went out to eat, Kellen and Allison got the opportunity to sing with a bluegrass band.

We met and worked with some wonderful people. They did not have money, running water, or inside bathrooms but they have a faith in God that we cannot imagine. To get up in the morning and know that you are disabled, out of work, and living in the poorest county in the United States, but that you can feel God everywhere you go and that you can look and see the beauty around you is true faithfulness. The kids and I went there thinking we were going to help others, but we came back with the realization that we were the ones that were blessed. Mary White, who is over the Community Center and works with the mission teams, is a great lady. She told us about the history there and took really good care of us.

Mrs. T and Mr. Harold were living near the top of a mountain. Their drinking water was rainwater caught in a barrel; they filtered it so it would be clean and safe to drink. We repaired the siding on their house, scraped and painted the wood. On the back side of their house was barely enough room for a scaffold before the yard dropped steeply away down the mountain. We repaired window facings and enjoyed the stories and good food. Mrs. T took Allison, Coby, and Kellen berry picking. Lynda and I got worried and went to look for them. (Mrs. T was not in good health.) She had walked them to the top of the mountain. It is so breathtakingly beautiful to look at the mountains! Mrs. T showed the kids how to make an old-fashioned mountain cobbler.

Mr. Jim's trailer was without running water also. A truck brings them water each week and puts it in a large tank on the side of the road. They had no inside bathroom. Kyle, Coby, Allison, and Kellen were a little surprised that there are people today without bathrooms. All in need would go to her mom's house down the road. We built a room on the back of their trailer for them. Mr. Jim would come and sing to us. He invited me to come and visit with his wife and himself. He took Allison, Kellen, and Coby to pick wild raspberries.

When asked if I would do it again, I say, "YES!" It was an experience that I will keep forever and I will go back someday. I think we all grew in faith. The team that went became a family. In my mind I can still see Mrs. T and Mr. Harold on the porch watching and trying to help, and Mr. Jim and his wife singing to us and making us feel at home. Mr. Jim gave me the keys to his wife's Jeep to take Kellen and Allison up and down the mountain. The trust, faith, and love of these people helped us all get closer to God. I always hear that He is with us always, but in Nora, Virginia, I could feel Him and see Him in the people and my love for Him grew stronger.

—KATHY DAVIS

I remember Mrs. T. We worked on her house. Mrs. T took Allison, Coby, and me to pick berries. Then we made a pie. Everybody was nice. We flatfooted (a type of mountain dance) in Virginia.

—KELLEN DAVIS

Last summer I went on one of the most meaningful mission trips I have ever been on. Like all the others, we worked on houses for some of the nicest people. I had an enlightening experience. I realized that I had been too much of what other people wanted and not the person I needed to be. This realization came to me while preparing a devotional for the group and when talking to a close friend.

During Christmas break, I joined in the efforts to bring Christmas to the children of Virginia. This experience was heartwarming as I saw their eyes light up as they were handed their gifts. They were realizing that they would have Christmas after all.

One of the "funnest" mission trips was the one to Fort Worth, Texas. This trip also seemed to be the most successful spiritually. We had fun working together and this spirit that we had motivating us seemed to wear off onto everyone else. This spirit was so strong that three people were saved while we were there and that made me realize that I could have a strong influence on someone's life.

—KYLE DAVIS

Last summer we went to Nora, Virginia to do mission work. We did some work on two houses. On one house we built another room. On the other we put up new siding and painted it. I helped make steps and got to help paint. The people were very nice and were very grateful to get what help we gave them.

—COBY WHITE

My trip to Virginia this summer was really cool! The sights were amazing! The people were really nice and very friendly. We worked on two houses. At the first house we painted and put in new steps on the back porch. We also put up new boards on the sides where there had been rotten wood before. At the second house we built a room on the back of a trailer.

Kellen Davis and I got to feed chickens and get their eggs at the second house. We went on breaks to International State Park and saw the Kentucky/Virginia line where it separates the two states. At the first house, Mrs. T's, we picked blackberries down by her house and made a blackberry cobbler.

When we first got there, we danced and had lots of fun. We learned how to flatfoot and lots of other things. It took like 11 hours to get there the first day going; I slept half of the way. I didn't coming home though! I hope to go back next year! I really miss it now and all the people. They were really nice! It was an awesome experience!

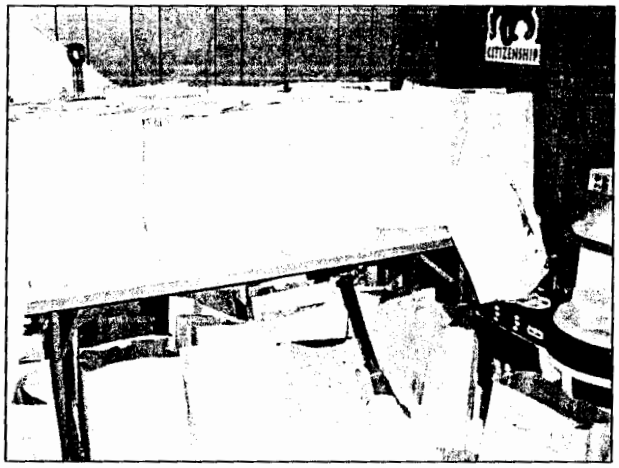
—ALLISON WORD

In December 2004, the mission group returned to Binns Count, VA, with another trailer load of toys and clothing.

The boy on the riding tractor is David Junior Rainwater. He prayed for a riding tractor but his parents told him not to get his hopes up. His mother said that on the morning the gifts were given out, he told her that Santa Claus was going to bring him a riding tractor no matter what she told him. He got it and they all cried.

Maddison Raynee Bible and her new bicycle.

The Binns Count crew the night that the toys were given to the children.



Assembled toy bags for the children of Binns Count.

PASTORS

Serving Smithville from the Alabama Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South

1838-1839	JOHN GILMORE
1840	J. C. STRICKLAND
1841	JOHN W. LANEY
1842	A. S. HARRIS
1843	JOHN A. SPENCE
1844	WILLIAM M. LOVELADY
1845	JOHN A. SPENCE
1846	JOHN W. ELLIS, JR
1847	WILLIAM KENNEDY NORTON
1848	JOHN A. SPENCE
1849	CHARLES S. HURT
1850	DENNIS B. LEYNE
1851-1852	THOMAS W. MANNING
1853	WILLIAM P. HARRISON
1854	ULYSSES L. THOMPSON
1855	FRANCIS T. J. BRANDON
1856	GEORGE W. BROWN
1857	JAMES D. CAMERON
1856	GEORGE W. BROWN
1857	JAMES D. CAMERON
1858	WILLIAM VAUGHAN
1859	CICERO L. DOBBS
1860-1861	ULYSSES L. THOMPSON
1862-1863	JESSE W. PERRY
1864-1865	GEORGE W. BROWN
1866	J. T. M. GREGORY
1867	J. G. WALKER
1868-1869	J. T. M. GREGORY

Serving Smithville from the North Mississippi Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South

1870	NATHANIEL THOMAS
1871	J. T. M. GREGORY
1872	ANDREW J. FOSTER
1873	ISAAC N. REEVES
1874-1875	JESSE W. PERRY
1876	PETER FLEMING
1877	LORENZO D. WORSHAM
1878-1879	GEORGE W. GORDON
1880-1881	H. B. SCRUGGS
1882-1885	WILLIAM SHARP SHIPMAN

(Pastor when the church burned and when it was rebuilt)

1886-1887	GEORGE W. GORDON
1888-1890	J. A. WHITEHURST
	BARTLETT B. SULLIVAN
1891-1892	FREEMAN A. WHITSON
1893	W. W. WOOLLARD
1894	J. E. BUCK
1895-1896	DANIEL L. COGDELL
1897-1898	KENNETH M. HARRISON
1899	E. P. CRADDOCK
1900	J. W. RAMSEY
1901	JAMES T. CUNNINGHAM
1902	S. L. POPE
1903	OBED LUTHER SAVAGE
1904-1906	THOMAS J. DURRETT
1907	JAMES C. McELROY
1908-1910	W. ALVIN BOWLIN
1911	L. T. SARGENT
1912-1913	A. S. BRISCO
1914-1917	DANIEL C. FAUST
1918	NORFLEET N. MAXEY
1919-1921	W. F. OWEN
1922-1923	J. R. MURFF
1924-1927	WILLIAM L. PEARSON
1928	STANTON M. BUTTS
1929-1930	T. W. SMALLWOOD
1931	W. S. SELMAN
1932-1934	J. V. STEWART
1935	G. A. BAKER
1936-1941	W. C. MATTOX

(The Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Episcopal Church became the Methodist Church in 1938.)

1942-1944	JAMES F. ELLIOTT
1945-1947	R. C. MAYO
1948-1952	LOUIS MARION WRIGHT
1953	CHARLES L. RANDLE
1954	ROBERT D. ALEXANDER, SR
1955	A. L. DAVENPORT
1956-1960	G. J. SHUMAKER
1960-1962	DOC JETER
1963-1968	WILLIAM THOMAS DEXTER

(The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church became the United Methodist Church in 1968.)

1969-1971	H. W. LAY
1972-1974	INGE M. HALBERT
1975-1978	FRANK G. BURTON
1978-1981	EDDIE FRANK ROBERTS
1982-1985	B.P. JACKSON
1985-1989	DAVIS ROY CAROTHERS
1989-2001	SAMMY WASHBURN
2001-Oct. 2002	ROBERT THOMAS WELCH, JR.
Nov. 2002-Dec. 2002	RON STEPHENS
Jan. 2003-Present	DARRELL SANDERSON

Some dates overlap from one pastorate to another; some appointments did not start in January but in various other months.

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EPILOGUE

Many members, past and present, of Smithville United Methodist Church have shared stories and memorabilia. Thank you all.

The church office holds scattered bits and pieces of our church's past in the files. Thank you to those who saved them over the years.