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### **Burnsville United Methodist Church, Burnsville, Mississippi 38833**



In 1832, after the railroad bypassed the town of Eastport overnight, a gentleman by the name of Jeremiah Burns migrated to the Burnsville area with his family and some other settlers. Most citizens of Eastport moved to Iuka; however, Mr. Burns—who owned a hotel and was a large landowner as well—stayed in the Burnsville area. The town was named after Mr. Burns; pioneer settlers added the “ville” to “Burns,” and the town became known as Burnsville.

Records show that there were at least three large hotels, many saloons, lumber companies, and mercantile companies in the early years of the town. Some settlers saw the need for a church to be added to the village. It is believed that this church was built around 1835. The pioneer settlers who instigated the building of the church obviously had clout because the church was built on the main thoroughfare or “main drag.” “Main drag,” meaning Front Street, was similar to Highway 72 in the earlier years. It was the main road leading directly to Corinth and Memphis. Unfortunately, the church does not have a record of the founders and the earliest membership of the congregation. Most probably it was destroyed by fire.

Before the Battle of Iuka, General Orr, under the command of General Grant, was located in Burnsville. He drilled his soldiers from this base and sent out parties to harass the Confederacy. During the Civil War, General Nathan Bedford Forrest camped in Burnsville before the Battle of Shiloh. J. C. Walters was Captain of the Burnsville Rifles during the Civil War. Due in part to all of the activity during this period, past records show that the Burnsville Methodist Church had a very large membership in 1865 during the Civil War days.

In the early 1900s, Dr. T. P. Haney was a prominent physician in the town of Burnsville for many years. Feeling that the church needed them, Dr. and Mrs. Haney continued to worship at the Burnsville church after they moved to Iuka. In fact, Dr. Haney donated the lot adjoining the church property to the church in 1944. This is where the fellowship hall stands today.

Early one Thursday morning in 1925 at about 4 a.m., the business section of Burnsville was destroyed by fire. The only building left standing was the Epperson Mercantile Company. The only items salvaged from the little white plank Methodist church were the antique table and chair at the back of the church and some Sunday School furniture that had been handmade by Mr. Gray, Mrs. Evelyn Reynolds' father. Also salvaged was the church bell outside. The fire occurred just before the Great Depression, and times were getting hard. Therefore, for several years, church services were held in the Burnsville School Building. Elaine Timbes, one of the church's oldest members, remembers the funeral of her brother in the schoolhouse in the early part of 1927.

The brick church was erected in the latter part of 1927. To raise funds for the new structure, Mrs. Evelyn Reynolds remembers that the ladies of the church prepared and cooked plate lunches. The young people of the church carried the food down the street to the old post office and sold the lunches for 25 or 35 cents per plate. The people of Burnsville gathered at the old post office for plate lunches, and with the money that was raised, the handmade church pews were constructed and paid for in full. Later the pews were upholstered by the M. L. Hatcher, Sr., family. Elaine Timbes also remembers a train bringing cokes and ice cream in 1926 or 1927 from Corinth. These items were sold at the ball field to raise money to help pay for the church facility. When the church construction was finished, the late Luther Kennedy installed the ceiling fans, and these fans are still in the church. The first Sunday School and worship service was held in the new building on January 8, 1928.

In 1953, the town of Burnsville was run by a group of ladies. The town was boastful of a lady Mayor and several Alderwomen. This was significant in that two of those ladies were members of the Burnsville Methodist Church.

The Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren in 1969. The new name became the Burnsville United Methodist Church.



In 1974, under the leadership of Rev. Grady Bailey, a fellowship hall, a kitchen, Sunday School rooms, and rest rooms were constructed by the late O'Neal Bonds. The project was paid for through donations. When the annex was completed, there was no outstanding debt. A plaque in the fellowship hall displays the names of the donors that made the annex possible.

The steeple on the church was donated by Mrs. Evelyn Reynolds. She also donated the piano and oversaw the implementation of the church's office. The communion table was donated by the late Olen Nixon. The small tables were donated by the Bundy Oaks family in memory of Mrs. Goldie Oaks, a former Burnsville postmistress. The shrub bushes in the landscaping outside were donated by the E. E. Gilliland family in honor of Wilma and Edward Gilliland. The prayer rail was built by Ferrell and Charles Skinner.

In 1999, beautiful stained glass windows were added to the church's sanctuary. The painted windows depict Jesus and the lambs, Jesus and the children, the Nativity scene, the baptism, Jesus knocking at the door, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Last Supper, the resurrection at the tomb, Madonna and child, the open Bible, and the crosses on the front windows. Pauline Forsythe was the artist; she crafted and painted the windows as well. A dedication of the stained glass windows was held on July 11, 1999, at 2 p.m. under the direction of Rev. Gene Vance.

Today, the Burnsville United Methodist Church is a small country church under the leadership of Rev. Wayne Napier.

*The history of the Burnsville United Methodist Church was submitted by Evelyn Skinner, 131 County Road 172, Iuka, Mississippi 38852, in October 2005.*