

A History of Byars-Cobbs Memorial United Methodist Church

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THE METHODIST FAITH IN THE GLADE NEAR A SPRING

The first settlers came to the Holston Valley about 1765. On the tides of emigration, which in the eighteenth century flowed to this high and healthful region, came members of the Methodist Societies. Most of these came mainly from Maryland, eastern and central Virginia and North Carolina. Preachers, exhorters and laymen preceded the circuit riders or itinerant ministers. They and the early circuit riders made a great contribution to Methodism in the westward movement. The church failed to record not only their deeds but, in most cases, even their names.

Emigration brought the first Methodists to Washington County somewhere between 1770 and 1775. While the early days of Methodism in the Glade Spring area are obscure, it is probable that the few Methodists worshipped with the people of the community at the Presbyterian Church founded at Ebbing Springs in 1772. (This location is some two miles southeast of Old Glade Spring and four miles south of the Glade Spring Town Square.) When this church building and its membership were moved to Old Glade Spring in 1792, the Methodists probably worshipped in the homes in the area and later at Kelly's Chapel or Mahaniam.

In a meadow located 4.1 miles from Glade Spring on route 750, there is a simple monument of towering significance:

"Site of the
Keywood House
in which the first
Methodist Conference
west of the Blue Ridge
was held by Bishop Asbury
May 13-15, 1788"

While preaching at Mahaniam Chapel (about 1/2 mile from Keywood) in 1806, Bishop Asbury mentioned two other Methodist Chapels within a radius of eight miles. The Methodist movement was underway throughout the hills and vales of this region.

In 1855, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad company decided to build a branch railway from Glade Spring to Saltville. Thus, the town of Glade Spring had its beginning. A depot was built in 1856. The five households in the vicinity at that time formed the nucleus for the forthcoming growth of the town as the trader, blacksmith, tanner, and people of other trades gravitated to the railroad. The name, Glade Spring, came from the Glade Spring Presbyterian Church located about two miles south of the town. This church took its name from its location in a long glade, clear of timber, near a large spring.

By 1861, a considerable village had grown up around the depot in Glade Spring, and a few years later the first Methodist Church building was erected.

An important contribution to the development of Methodism in this section was the founding of Emory and Henry College in 1838. The post office address of the college was Glade Spring. Among the recorded names of influential Methodists of this area is that of John Wesley Price. This lay evangelist of the old school who settled his family on a farm at Price's Bridge was worthy of his name. Holston Methodist history says Methodism was scarcely known in this section when he moved to Washington County; but when he died in 1863, it was one of the strongest Methodist communities in the country. His work resulted in great revivals throughout the community.

At the turn of the century, L.P. Summers wrote, "Methodism has always been strong in Washington County, of an evangelical type, and a powerful factor in educating and refining the people and creating a good quality of citizenship."

BYARS-COBBS MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In 1913, J. D. Williams and Sam Keys visited Mrs. Augustus Rhinehart in Covington, Virginia, to solicit funds for the new church building. Mrs. Rhinehart, the former Mrs. William Cobbs, gave \$2,500 in cash and the large stained glass window of Christ on the Road to Emmaus. Mr. William Cobbs was the nephew of Mrs. William (Sarah) Byars who once lived in the large, old brick home near the Norfolk and Western underpass. Thus, for the large donation and continued interest in Glade

Spring and Methodism, the church was named after the two families, Byars-Cobbs. The building was paid for totally before it was finished because of free materials, free labor and generous cash gifts. The land for the new church, located at what was then Main and Oak Streets (now Glade and Kirkwood Streets), was given by J. Rolson Hendricks (1853-1944) by deed executed on September 30, 1913. The deed reads, in part: "IN TRUST, that all said premises shall be used, kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of divine worship for the use of the ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; . . ." "Ross" Hendricks, as he was known to all, was a farmer and he was the Glade Spring Postmaster, 1898-1900. His name appears on the Sunday School Roll Book 1891-1894 and on the 1902 Church Membership Register. There is no available documentation of the dedication of the Byars-Cobbs Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The stone marker on the church reads 1914, and older church members have given the date of June 21, 1914, with Judge F. B. Hutton presiding over a Masonic Ceremony. Since then, two major additions have been made to accommodate the growing Sunday School.

OPEN THE DOOR AND SEE ALL OF THE PEOPLE!

It has been more than 80 years [sic] since Glade Spring Methodists moved from the white frame building to the brick building, with its high ceiling and beautiful stained-glass windows. The evangelical fervor of early Methodism was a prevailing and persuasive influence for about twenty-five years. When Rev. W. A. "Billy" Sunday, the famous evangelist, preached in the sanctuary, the crowd was so large that the rear stained-glass windows on the Oak Street (now Kirkwood Street) side were removed in order that the crowd on the temporary bleachers outside could see and hear. Dan Graham conducted a revival equal to the Hipes revival of another day. There must have been many memorable membership Sundays in the life of the church which cannot be discussed because of lack of data. The great, soul-saving revivals led many to the Sacrament of Baptism and church membership. It is interesting to note four dates of significance in membership. Church records show thirty-four persons were received into the church in April of 1911 by Rev. J. T. Guy. The seeds of inspiration for a new and larger church building may have been planted about this time because it was during the ministry of Rev. Guy that the new church was built. In 1914 and 1915, Rev. J. L. Prater received approximately sixty-four persons into membership, which would indicate a good beginning in the new church building. Another great day for church membership was March 6, 1927, when Rev. Elmer W. Dean baptized thirty-four persons and received ten through vows and ten by certificate of transfer. Rev. Marvin S. Kincheloe received thirty-nine new church members in

March, 1935. Through two World Wars; conflicts in Korea, Viet Nam and other areas of the earth; a great depression; the Atomic Age and Space Age and many other notable events, the church has faced many challenges and changes, In a far simpler time, the simple, white frame church was a dominant influence in the community. The last forty-five years, however, have been characterized as having produced a mobile, searching, confused and complex society. The church endeavors, even struggles, to reach out to feed His lambs and satisfy the spiritual needs of many. History can record, at best, some of the events in the life or development of a church. The judgment of all deeds is reserved to the Lord.

PRAISE HIM! PRAISE HIM!

The preservation, maintenance and expansion of church properties are topics which have consumed untold hours and plagued committees and boards over the years. Many loyal and faithful workers have given their prayers, time, labor and money to preserve and enhance the beauty of the Lord's House. Rev. Kenneth Sprinkle wrote in 1981, "God receives the glory, not because a few people gave great gifts, but because everyone worked together, giving as led by the Lord." In 1931 a Men's Bible Classroom was the first major addition to the seventeen-year-old church building. The second major addition was in 1953 when eight church school classrooms were built and the men's classroom was converted to a church kitchen. During the sixties, attention was focused primarily on the needs of the ministers. A new parsonage was built and furniture for the parsonage was purchased. A church office was provided and shrubbery for parsonage and church lots was planted. In the seventies, the need for parking space was met with the acquisition of property and the completion of a parking lot. Another need was met by contracting with the Cathedral Glass Company, Inc., of Evansville, Indiana, in September 1976, for stained window repairs and for the installation of protective coverings for the windows. In the eighties, the major emphasis was the renovation of the church sanctuary. In addition to repairs and painting, those who love and serve the church provided new front doors, carpeting, pew pads, choir pews, sanctuary lights, vestibule lights and a new piano and a new organ. During the past few years, the sanctuary and fellowship hall have been air-conditioned. The Gilmer House, located on property adjacent to the church's property, was purchased to be used for Sunday School classrooms, office space, a place to hold meetings, and as a storage facility. "O thou who dost the vision send And givest each his task, And with the task sufficient strength; Show us thy will, we ask. Give us a conscience bold and good; Give us a purpose true, That it may be our highest joy, Our Father's work

to do." O Master Workman of the Race Jay T. Stocking (1870-1936)

A PARSONAGE IS A PLACE WHERE PARSONS COME AND GO

The early traveling Methodist minister, in this hill country, surely found the pine boughs the only roof over his head on many occasions. Later the horse carried his rider into clearings where he found the log homes and warm fires of the early settlers in this part of the Holston Territory. As Methodism grew and its followers increased, the circuit rider became a familiar figure. A real consideration must have been the location of a parsonage for the parson, It is believed the first parsonage occupied by a pastor serving Glade Spring was at Cedarville. That parsonage was sold and the church rented a house, located on the present Railway Avenue in Glade Spring, for less than a year. The third parsonage was the Martin Place on the present address, 226 Maple Avenue. After the sale of this parsonage, the present 208 Maple Avenue became the home for Methodist ministers. The fifth parsonage was purchased for the sum of \$4,000 in 1919 from Paul D. and Lelia P. Greever. For the next forty years, this frame building with its large porch served as home for our pastors and their families, Between 1959 and 1963, the quickly aging building was periodically rented and the pastors lived in the parsonage at Meadowview. In June 1964, the house was razed and the sixth and only originally-constructed parsonage was built at 106 Oak Street (now known as Kirkwood Street).

MINISTERS

DATES

MINISTERS

YEARS OF SERVICE

There is no record of the itinerant or local preachers prior to 1873

1873-1874	Daniel H. Atkins	1 year
1874-1875	Tobias F. Smyth	1 year
1875-1878	Enoch W. Moore	3 years
1878-1879	William H. Kelly	1 year
1879-1881	Benjamin W. S. Bishop	2 years
1881-1885	Andrew J. Frazier	4 years
1885-1887	David Vance Price	2 years
1887-1888	John L. M. French	1 year
1888-1889	John E. Naff	1 year

DATESMINISTERSYEARS OF SERVICE

1889-1890	John W. Parrott	1 year
1890-1891	John E. Naff	1 year
1891-1894	Elijah F. Kahle	3 years
1894-1897	William N. Wagner	3 years
1897-1898	Rush F. Jackson	1 year
1898-1902	J. W. W. Shuler	4 years
1902-1904	Kennerly C. Atkins	2 years
1904-1908	George William Summers	4 years
1908-1910	Lemuel L. H. Carlock	2 years
1910-1914	J. T. Guy	4 years
1914-1917	John Lindsey Prater	3 years
1917-1918	Thomas R. Handy	1 year
1918-1920	Harry S. Hutsell	2 years
1920-1921	John W. Browning	1 year
1921-1923	Jacob LaFayette Griffitts	2 years
1923-1924	William H. Walker	1 year
1924-1928	Elmer Wiley Dean	4 years
1928-1929	R. E. Regan	1 year
1929-1930	Samuel L. Browning	1 year
1930-1932	Charles E. Steele	2 years
1932-1935	Marvin S. Kincheloe	3 years
1935-1936	John K. Dean	1 year
1936-1938	W. Paul Worley	2 1/4 years
1938-1940	James L. Patterson	1 3/4 years
1940-1944	John W. Hammer	4 years
1944-1947	Dean M. Neese	3 years
1947-1951	Wilmer B. Robbins	4 years
1951-1955	George W. Atkinson	4 years
1955-1957	Damon B. Mitchell	2 years
1957-1960	Morgan K. Phillips	3 years
1960-1963	C. Walter Martin	3 years
1963-1966	Stanley C. McCready	3 years
1966-1969	David B. Looney	3 years
1969-1970	Rudolph Hollingsworth	1 year
1970-1977	Charles C. Kesting	7 years
1977-1980	William S. Murphy	2 1/2 years
1980-1988	Kenneth L. Sprinkle	7 1/2 years
1988-1989	Jack Pickering	1 year
1989-1990	Charlie Dye	1 year
1990-1995	Glenn C. Weller	5 years
1995-1996	Greg Garland	1 year
1996-2001	Tim Graham	4 years
2001-2001	Nick White	4 months

2001-2001	W.H. Martin	2 months
2001-2005	Jim Denton	4 years
2005-2007	Todd Adams	2 years
2007-	Paul Griffith	