

Strawbridge United Methodist Church

The Strawbridge United Methodist Church was established *ca.* 1916, as Smith Chapel (1916-1917). The land belonged to Joe Smith whose daughter Terri Englar, employed Hattie (Thompson) Hill as a domestic worker. Hattie Hill encouraged the Englar family to donate the land for church use only (*hence the original name*, Smith Chapel). The current church building was completed in 1918 under the leadership of the Reverend Isaac R. Berry, and the church became Strawbridge Methodist Episcopal Church. The cemetery in front of the church, adjacent to Route 31 (St James Cemetery) can be attributed to African-American men who worked for Lehigh Cement, Union Bridge. These men were members of Strawbridge and the cement company donated the land. When Strawbridge M.E. Church was established, brothers Simon and Jesse Murdock were trustees along with four others. Simon Murdock, an African American Civil War veteran who lived in a log house nearby, helped build the church and assisted when the church established its first Sunday school. Over time, it became the home congregation for five small churches, four of which no longer exist. They include the former Western Chapel, south of Westminster (that burned down in the 1950's), Mt Olive M.E. Church, just over the Carroll/Frederick County line (merged, June 1962), Mt Joy M.E. Church of Uniontown (closed 1962) and Lee's Chapel of Union Bridge. These churches began as Methodist Episcopal and were part of the Washington Conference. The Strawbridge church has been altered with front office space and a vestibule, a rear fellowship hall with a kitchen and bathrooms, air-conditioning, and a handicap-accessible ramp. Strawbridge United Methodist Church continues to be a beacon of light and hope for the wayward traveling soul on the corner of MD Route 31 and Wakefield Valley Road, New Windsor, MD.

