

THE HISTORY OF BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Compiled by Robin P. "Rob" Williams, Bethel United Methodist Men (BUMM) September 2010



38° 39.311' N, 77° 18.525' W

Bethel

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Bethel (**Ugaritic**: *bt il*, meaning "**House of El**" or "**House of God**",^[1] **Hebrew**: בֵּית אֵל, also **transliterated** **Beth El**, **Beth-El**, or **Beit El**; **Greek**: Βαιθηλ; **Latin**: *Bethel*) was a border city described in the **Hebrew Bible** as being located between **Benjamin** and **Ephraim**. **Eusebius of Caesarea** and **Jerome** describe it in their time as a small village that lay 12 Roman miles north of **Jerusalem**, to the right or east of the road leading to **Neapolis**.^[2]

FOREWORD

Bethel United Methodist Church (BUMC) has been around for 160 years as this was written. It started out as a small country Church but eventually grew into a larger Church that served the community in many ways. The history is intertwined with the history of the area which includes the Civil War. Much of the history isn't very well documented and what is documented here should be reviewed with a reserved perspective as the history wasn't documented as it was created. In fact, Bethel UMC was over-shadowed in the local history by many of the other more famous landmarks including Brentsville Courthouse, Dumfries UMC, and others. In comparison, many of these landmarks are much older with greater significance to the area history. The few official records have been heavily supplemented by folklore which doesn't always lend to factual accuracy but does tend to give a perspective on the area and the Church. That being said, Bethel served the community very well from the records found and has a history worth telling and repeating.

Also, not all aspects can be viewed with a current perspective. Just like the Bible, the context of the times is critical to an understanding of the facts. Some presentations in this history may be somewhat not in line with our desires to perceive them with current Christian values. The issue of slavery in this history, while presented very briefly, was present when the Church was first founded and that fact shouldn't be ignored. The acceptance of slaves in the Church to hear the Gospel should be celebrated, I believe, as a step down the path towards equality for all as is preached in the Gospel. The gruesome character of the Civil War should also NOT be ignored as it was the reality of the times and still has an impact on Bethel Church and our country today.

Robin P. Williams, your author, is a retired Air Force officer who also worked as a Historian several times and wrote a number of official Air Force unit histories.



PASTORS OF BETHEL UMC

1860 – xxxx	Burr Glasscock ¹
1885	J.C. Jones ²
1887 – 1891	Charles B. Sutton ³
1891 – 1893	Charles K. Millican ⁴
1893 – 1897	C.E. Simmons (may have been there through 1902) ⁵
1897 – 1898	Jas W. Grubb ⁶
1897 – 1899	S.V. Hildebrand ⁷
1901 – 1903	J.W. Bain ⁸
1903 – 1904	W.B. Dorsey and W.B. Duffy ⁹
1904	S.V. Hildebrand ¹⁰
1906	Charles Lynch ¹¹
1907 – 1911	C. Sydenstricker ¹²
1911 – 1914	L.B. (or L.V.) Adkins ¹³

¹ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

² Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge

³ ibid

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge (this minister had entries of marriages in the records but it's not know if they were visiting ministers or posted to the Charge)

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² ibid

¹³ ibid

1913	Oliver ¹⁴
1914 - 1916	Harvey L. Bivens ¹⁵
1916 – 1917	Z.B. Randall ¹⁶
1917 – 1920	G.E. Smith ¹⁷
1920 – 1923	J.W. Beall ¹⁸
1923	German Methodist Minister ¹⁹
1924 – 1925	Glenn Cooper ²⁰
1924 – 1927	W.H. Marsh ²¹
1927 – 1932	Harold H. Hoyt ²²
1932	A.H. Shumate ^{23 24}

¹⁴ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

¹⁵ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge (this minister had entries of marriages in the records but it's not know if they were visiting ministers or posted to the Charge)

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge (this minister had entries of marriages in the records but it's not know if they were visiting ministers or posted to the Charge)

¹⁹ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

²⁰ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge (this minister had entries of marriages in the records but it's not know if they were visiting ministers or posted to the Charge)

²¹ *ibid*

²² *ibid*

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Note that references 3 and 12 identify different dates for Reverend A.H. Shumate.



Reverend Shumate, October 1, 1982

1932 - 1934	Elmer A. Wilcher ²⁵ ²⁶
	Rhinehardt ²⁷
	Hokum ²⁸
1949/1950 – xxxx	Clark Wood ²⁹
1950 – 1954	Ed Wright ³⁰
1954 – 1955	John Reece ³¹
1955 – 1957	Donald Stanton ³²
1957	A.H. Shumate ³³

²⁵ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

²⁶ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge (name updated from Mrs Tury's research as she personally knew him)

²⁷ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² *ibid*

³³ Newspaper Article, "Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

1957 – 1962

Clyde W. Dews³⁴ ³⁵



Rev. Clyde Dews leading 1959 Easter Sunrise Service at the Puffenbarger Pond

1962 - 1964

Chapman Mercer³⁶

1964 - 1967

Larry O. Tingle³⁷

1967 – 1974

Jacob R. Miller³⁸

³⁴ Publication, The Methodist Church, Membership Manual, Part I, Church History, Membership Roll, Church Officials, for use on Bethel-Silverbrook Charge, February 1960

³⁵ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington



Rev. Jake Miller circa 1967

1977 -

Frederick L. Parish



The Reverend Frederick Parish





Pastor Fred Parish

ASSOCIATE PASTORS OF BETHEL UMC

1977

1998

2008

Larry Clark – Associate Pastor³⁹

Marilyn Spencer – Associate Pastor⁴⁰

Lemuel Pearsall – Associate Pastor⁴¹



³⁹ Brief Interview, Frederick Parish with Robin P. Williams, October 3, 2010

⁴⁰ Publication, “The Bethel Bell” newsletter, August 1999

⁴¹ Personal knowledge of author, Robin P. Williams, who was a member of Bethel UMC from 2002 to 2010 when this was written

Rev Larry Clark

Rev Lemuel Pearsall

CHRONOLOGY OF BETHEL UMC

1850 – Bethel United Methodist Church established

1858 – March 12th – Deed to the property stating “That they shall finish the House that is commenced thereon, for a place of worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, according to the Rules and Discipline which from time to time may be agreed and adopted by the ministers and preachers of said Church, at their General Conference and in further trust and confidence that they shall at all times, forever hereafter, permit such ministers and preachers, . . . to preach and expound God’s Holy Word therein.”

1932 – Reverend A.H. Shumate organized the Sunday School and the Bethel Ladies Aid Society⁴²

1950 – The Bethel United Methodist Men (BUMM) started selling Christmas Trees

1952 – Chandelier electrified⁴³

1957 – Sunday school added

1958 – Central heating and indoor plumbing added to original Church⁴⁴

1962 – Altar and benches replaced by Altar and Benches from Claridon Church, Arlington, VA⁴⁵

1964 – Bethel UMC sponsored Boy Scout Troop 1363⁴⁶

1967 – Methodist Men’s Group established⁴⁷

1968 – Bethel Bell was added to the church⁴⁸

1968 – Muriel Humphrey School for Retarded Children began using the building⁴⁹

1968 – Methodist Church merged with the United Brethern Church⁵⁰

1974 – Parsonage purchased and full time minister appointed to Bethel

1977 – Original Church moved from the location that became the intersection of Minnieville and Smoketown Roads

1985 – Seabees volunteer to renovate the Original Church

⁴² Letter, Compilation of Historical Dates provided by Reverend Fred Parish in September 2010 – details unconfirmed

⁴³ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ Newspaper Article, “Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

⁴⁹ Letter, Compilation of Historical Dates provided by Reverend Fred Parish in September 2010 – details unconfirmed

⁵⁰ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

In the early to mid-1800s much of the land in Prince William County was used for horse and dairy farms.⁵¹ “After the Revolutionary War the Anglican Church fell into disfavor with the public, primarily, because it was associated with the former British rule. Protestant sects grew in number and by 1800 Methodist-Episcopal societies were organized in Prince William County. The first Methodist-Episcopal Church was built in Dumfries in 1801. Almost all the early M-E ministers were circuit riders. Many visited in the home of Burr and Emsey Glasscock, who lived a few miles from here off what is now known as Davis-Ford Road”⁵² (which parts of later became Smoketown Road and Prince William Parkway).⁵³

“Very often a traveling minister would appear and excite the public about the religion, which was formed by British minister John Wesley, who brought it to the United States where he found many converts, mostly in the South and the Midwest. The traveling minister appointed someone to take charge until he would pass that way again. It would often be a self-educated leader of a community of about a dozen.”⁵⁴

In the year 1850, some Virginians living in a rural section of Prince William County saw a need for the influence of a church in the community. On donated property at the intersection of two (2) dirt roads they worked together to build the structure which was to house the people of the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The purpose behind their efforts can be understood from the statement appearing in the deed to the property dated the twelfth (12th) day of March in the year of the Lord 1858: “That they shall finish the House that is commenced thereon, for a place of worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, according to the Rules and Discipline which from time to time may be agreed and adopted by the ministers and preachers of said Church, at their General Conference and in further trust and confidence that they shall at all times, forever hereafter, permit such ministers and preachers, . . . to preach and expound God’s Holy Word therein.” The building was finished and remains in use as a tribute to the foresight of the Virginian Christians.⁵⁵ There were only about a dozen or so loyal attendees.⁵⁶

The land was donated by Burr and Emsey Glasscock who donated the land that was then on Davis Ford Road.^{57 58} It’s believed Burr Glasscock was the appointed minister to hold services until the traveling minister of the Methodist-Episcopal societies could pass through town once again.⁵⁹ The

⁵¹ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

⁵² Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁵³ Comments by the author, Robin P. Williams, based upon his personal knowledge of the area over the last 15 years

⁵⁴ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁵⁵ Church Directory, Bethel United Methodist Church, Woodbridge, VA, ~1974

⁵⁶ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

⁵⁷ Newspaper Article, “Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

⁵⁸ Book, Prince William, The Story of its People and Its Places, sponsored by The Bethlehem Club, Manassas, Virginia, 1988

⁵⁹ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

Church was located in a village called Bethel.⁶⁰ The Church was a simple, one-story, frame church with a shingled, gabled roof.⁶¹ Burr Glasscock later became a Prince William County supervisor.



BURR GLASSCOCK
1812-1896



EMSEY (LAKE) GLASSCOCK
1816-1885⁶²

There were rumors of a “slave balcony” in the Bethel Church. According to Mrs. Gaskill, who was researching blacks in Prince William County, there was an ex-slave of the Rucker family who was named Saul. Saul had married an Irish woman and had 5 children. The Bethel “congregation had not taken a bi-racial marriage too well, obviously,” and Saul had to sit up in the slave balcony while his wife and children sat with the rest of the congregation. Years later, Saul was allowed to join his family.⁶³

“During the early 1800’s the area’s economic situation had deteriorated. Much of our market depended heavily on foreign trade which had fallen off after the Revolution and the War of 1812. By the 1840’s, several large plantations had to sell their land and even advertised heavily in the northern newspapers, particularly New York and New Jersey. Land was sold at rock-bottom prices and therefore many new people moved into the area – a great many in response to the ads. They became farmers, primarily horse and dairy farmers. This northern influx was one reason Price William was not a secure stronghold for the Confederates during the War Between the States.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Book, Prince William County, A pictoral History, by D’Anne Evans

⁶¹ Book, Prince William: A Past to Preserve, Laurie C. Wieder, Editor, and Keith Adam Jacobson, Historical Commission Publications Chairman

⁶² Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

⁶³ Letter, Bethel Historical Society History Report, by Donna Pine, Bethel Historian, March 7, 1995

⁶⁴ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981



Bethel UMC Original Church with Attached School Rooms

When Virginia withdrew from the Union in May 1861, the land south of the Occoquan was controlled by the Confederacy until March 1862.⁶⁵ The **First Battle of Bull Run**, also known as the **First Battle of Manassas** (the name used by Confederate forces and still often used in the [Southern United States](#)), was fought on July 21, 1861, near [Manassas, Virginia](#). It was the first major land battle of the [American Civil War](#). Given the proximity to the battlefield it's likely the Church building was used to support troops in the area. The Civil War saw the building used as a hospital and a stable. "With the great number of sick and wounded soldiers, it was often necessary to use churches and private homes as makeshift hospitals. After combat, the wounded were brought into a building where straw would be scattered on the floor to soak up the blood. The conditions of these field hospitals were very primitive; often no medicine was available and very little food other than hardtack and black coffee. During the cold winter of 1861-62 there was much disease – typhoid fever was one of the illnesses to hit."⁶⁶ The wounded were brought here to be treated from the Hoadly and Woodbridge battlefields.⁶⁷ Often soldiers from both armies would be housed there at the same time. The Glasscock sisters said they got along

⁶⁵ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

⁶⁶ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁶⁷ Letter, Bethel Historical Society History Report, by Donna Pine, Bethel Historian, March 7, 1995

fine.⁶⁸ One skirmish also took place “very near Bethel at the site of the original Greenwood Presbyterian Church.”⁶⁹ ⁷⁰

In August 1862, **The Second Battle of Bull Run in Manassas** resulted in a Southern victory and, again, it’s likely the Church building was used for shelter around the time of the battle. The Church was damaged during the war due to use as a hospital and as a stable. The blood and animal refuse stained the floor boards which required replacement.⁷¹ “Bethel could not be used as a place for worship again until major repairs took place after the war ended. The loyal members once again rallied to rebuild their church. It has been said that all the floorboards had to be replaced because of the blood stains that remained.”⁷² There were rumors the children in the area sat outside the Church following the battles to watch the amputated limbs being tossed out the windows.⁷³ The Glascock (built in 1848 and later owned by Russell⁷⁴) house which stood nearby was also used as the Union headquarters during the war. The house wasn’t damaged during the war due to the fact it was owned by a Yankee. There was also supposed to be a blacksmith nearby and the location between Occoquan and Dumfries would make it an ideal location for a headquarters.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Publication, “The Bethel Bell,” May 1982, interview with James Woodrow “Woodie” Taylor, longtime resident of the community who personally knew the Glascock sisters.

⁶⁹ *ibid*

⁷⁰ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁷¹ Book, *This Was Prince William*, by R. Jackson Ratcliffe

⁷² Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

⁷³ Story, Told by Rev Frederick Parish in 2010 during a sermon from recollections and conversations he had with descendants of family members who were around during the civil war

⁷⁴ Letter, Bethel Historical Society History Report, by Donna Pine, Bethel Historian, March 7, 1995

⁷⁵ *ibid*



Civil War Battle Map

There were a number of military operations around Bethel UMC and its very likely military units passed by or visited as the Occoquan Road (later Davis Ford Road and then later Minnieville Road) was a major thoroughfare in the county. Following are some of the local military actions that were around when the Church was present.

"Dumfries Raid (14) Northbound Rt. 1 near "V,"Dumfries On 26 December 1862, Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart led 1,800 cavalry out of Fredericksburg on his third and last major raid. Stuart divided his column and on 27 December launched a two-pronged attack on Dumfries, a major Union supply base. The garrison thwarted the Confederate cavalry commanded by Brig Gen. Fitzhugh Lee and Brig. Gen. W.H.F. ("Rooney") Lee despite the efforts of Stuart's legendary horse artillery. Stuart continued the raid through Occoquan, Burke's Station, Fairfax Court House, Warrenton, and Culpeper before returning to Fredericksburg on 1 Jan 1836. During the raid, Stuart seized some 200 prisoners, as many horses and mules and 20 wagonloads of equipment."⁷⁶

Military Operations (32) The road was again used during the Civil War for military purposes. Bacon Race Church (c. 1845) served as a supply depot for Wade Hampton's Confederate Brigade. Several Confederate Regiments were camped in the vicinity to support blockade operations along the Potomac River during the winter of **1861-1862**.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vapwilli/history/historicplaces.html>

⁷⁷ *ibid*

Minnieville (21) Northern dairymen developed large farms here in the early 19h century. The Confederate 3rd Brigade was located in this area in 1861 ~2. On this corner stood the Minnieville Post office L (1884~1924).⁷⁸

Old Telegraph Road (24) Main door entrance to Potomac Mills Mall Just to the east the original route of the ancient trail used to lay the first telegraph wire from Washington to New Orleans in 1847. During the Civil War it became a strategic military objective. It was first used by Confederate forces supporting their blockade of the Potomac River. Later, it was used by Union occupational troops.⁷⁹

Bristow Military Operations (38) Rt. 28 at Broad Creek Run (39&40) Here on the afternoon of August 26, 1862 Stonewall Jackson's army destroyed the railroad and bridge across Broad Run cutting Pope's supply line and bringing on the Second Battle of Manassas. On October 14, 1863 A.P. Hill leading the II Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia struck Mead's army crossing Broad Run and suffered a severe defeat from G. K. Warren's II Corps hidden behind the railroad embankment.⁸⁰

Battle of Bristoe Station (39) Bristow Road near railroad track in Bristow In autumn 1863 Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, with Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill's III Corps in the lead, pursued Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's Union army as it withdrew toward Washington. On the afternoon of 14 October Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren's II Corps, Meade's rear guard, took a strong defensive position along this railroad embankment to meet an impetuous attack by elements of Hill's corps from the northwest. The Confederates were repulsed with heavy losses (about 1,300 casualties to Warren's 548), including an unsupported battery of five guns about 500 yards north. Warren stealthily withdrew after dark to resume his march to Centreville. About 43 Union and 137 Confederate dead were buried on the field.⁸¹

Action at Briscoe Station (40) Bristow Road near railroad tracks in Bristow , On 24 August 1862 Maj. Gen. Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson's command, led by Col. Thomas T. Munford's 2nd Virginia Cavalry and Maj. Gen. John Pope's Union army. They surprised and captured Pope's infantry pickets, derailed two northbound trains, destroyed the Broad Run bridge, and cut telegraph wires to sever the Union lines of supply and communication with Washington. Jackson then captured Pope's supply depot at Manassas Junction (present-day Manassas). Left as a rear guard, Ewell held off Union Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's division near Kettle Run the next day just before the Second Battle of Manassas. Future Marker

Brentsville (41) Bristow Road at the Brentsville Church Fourth seat of the Prince William County Government. Courthouse, jail, Episcopal Chapel, and white house were built in 1822 on land originally part of the Brent Town tract confiscated from Robert Bristow, a Tory, in 1779. St. James Church of Dettingen Parish (now Hatcher's Memorial Baptist), was built in 1847 on the site of the old chapel. During the War Between the States Col. Mosby operated in this area. In 1893 the county seat was moved to Manassas.⁸²

Thoroughfare Gap (64) Rt. 55, Gainesville Five miles northwest is Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains. Through that Gap J.E. Johnston and Jackson came, July 19, 1861, on their way to the First Battle of Manassas. Through it Lee sent Jackson August 26, 1862, and followed with Longstreet to take part in the Second Battle of Manassas.⁸³

First Battle of Manassas (57) Rt. 29, west of 234 On the Matthews Hill, just to the north, the Confederates repulsed the attack of the Unionists. Coming from the north, in the forenoon of July 21,

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ ibid

⁸⁰ ibid

⁸¹ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vapwilli/history/historicplaces.html>

⁸² ibid

⁸³ ibid

1861. The Union forces, reinforced, drove the Confederates to the Henry Hill, just to the south. There the latter reformed under cover of Stonewall Jackson, in the afternoon, McDowell vainly attempted to rally his retreating troops on the Matthews Hill after they had been driven down the Henry Hill.⁸⁴

Untitled Marker (58) Rt. 29, west of Rt. 234 This marker, erected by the Haymarket Agricultural Club, indicates the spot where General R. E. Lee, General Longstreet, and General Jackson, met on August 2th, 1862, about 12:30p.m. as certified by Lieut. Col. Edmund Berkeley, sole survivor of the meeting, who served that day on General Longstreet's staff, by special order.⁸⁵

Second Battle of Manassas (59) Rt. 29, west of Rt. 234 The center of Lee's Army rested here on August 30, 1862; Jackson was to the north of this road, Longstreet to the south. Late in the afternoon, after Jackson had repulsed Pope's assaults, Longstreet moved eastward, driving the Union forces facing him toward Henry Hill. Jackson advanced southward at the same time.⁸⁶

Sudley Methodist Church (60) Rt. 234, 8 miles north of Manassas The site for the first church a small brick building, was donated by Landon Carter of Woodland in 1822. During the Battles of Manassas (Bull Run), it was used as a field hospital by both the North and the South, but was so badly damaged that it was razed and a frame church built in its place. The second church was struck by lightning in 1918 and burned. The present church was dedicated in 1922. The annual Sudley Church bazaar has been a gathering place for friends and neighbors for decades.⁸⁷

Henry House (51) Rt. 234, south of Rt. 29 These are the grounds of the Henry House, where occurred the main action of the First Battle of Manassas, July 21, 1861, and the closing scene of the Second Battle of Manassas, August 30, 1862.⁸⁸

James Robinson House (52) Rt. 29, Rt. 234 To the south stood the farmhouse of James Robinson, a former slave freed by Landon Carter. There, during the First Battle of Manassas on 21 July 1861, Col. Wade Hampton's Legion covered the Confederates falling back to Henry Hill, where Jackson stood "like a stone wall." The house survived that battle, and during the Second Battle of Manassas in August 1862 served the Union troops as a field hospital. Congress later authorized compensation to Robinson for the property damages. The present house stands partially.⁸⁹

The Stone Bridge (54) Rt. 29, east of Rt. 234 The old stone bridge, just to the north, played a part in the Battles of Manassas. Here rested the Confederate left in the early morning of July 21, 1861; *over the bridge Pope's retreating Army passed, August 30, 1862.*⁹⁰

Campaign of Second Manassas (55) Rt 29, west of Rt. 234, Here Taliaferro, of Jackson's force, came into the highway in the late night of August 27, 1862. He was marching from Manassas to the position about a mile and a half to the north held by Jackson in the Second Battle of Manassas.⁹¹

First Battle of Manassas (56) Rt. 29, west of Rt. 234 Henry Hill lies just to the south. Here the Confederates repulsed the repeated attacks of the Union Army under McDowell, July 21, 1861.⁹²

⁸⁴ ibid

⁸⁵ ibid

⁸⁶ ibid

⁸⁷ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vapwilli/history/historicplaces.html>

⁸⁸ ibid

⁸⁹ ibid

⁹⁰ ibid

⁹¹ ibid

⁹² ibid

Fifth Prince William County Courthouse (47) Lee Avenue, Manassas The city of Manassas originated in 1852 at the junction of the Manassas Gap and the Orange & Alexandria railroads. During the Civil War, the junction's strategic significance led to two important battles nearby. After the war, as the community grew, citizens sought to move the county seat there from Brentsville. In 1872, a year before Manassas was incorporated as a town, and again in 1888, referenda failed. A third referendum in 1892 succeeded. This Romanesque Revival courthouse, designed by James C. Teague and Philip T. Marye, of Norfolk and Newport News, was completed in 1893 and served the county until 1984 when a new courthouse was built nearby.⁹³

McLean Farm (48) (Yorkshire Plantation) Rt. 28 at Yorkshire Market Part of an early 18th century plantation established on Bull Run by Col. Richard Blackburn formerly of Yorkshire, England. The land was acquired by Wilmer McLean in 1854. The battle which opened 1st Manassas raged across this farm July 18, 1861, with the house and barn used as a headquarters and hospital by Confederate troops. Following 1st Manassas, in an attempt to escape the forefront of the war, McLean moved his family to the tiny village of Appomattox Court House. There, four years later, the War would come' full circle to end in McLean's parlor with Lee's surrender to Grant, April 9, 1865.⁹⁴

The Potomac River and Prince William County also hosted a number of Confederate military posts where for the first five months of the war the river was blockaded and prevented Union supplies from reaching Washington by the river. Union military actions later captured the Maryland shore and a superior Union Navy broke the blockade and captured or destroyed all the gun emplacements on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Quantico, Virginia was the site of one of the Confederate batteries that used Union artillery captured at the First Battle of Bull Run.⁹⁵

Other local landmarks in the immediate vicinity of Bethel UMC follow.

Old Bethel High School (25) Smoketown Road in parking lot of Smoketown Plaza On this site once stood the first high school in eastern Prince William County. The original two-story wood frame building was built in 1914. Lightning struck and destroyed the school on June 12, 1927. It was rebuilt as a two-room brick elementary school on the same site. Bethel was the center of many rural activities which reflected the simple lifestyle of this farming community. On March 31, 1968 the school was rededicated as the Muriel Humphrey School for the mentally retarded and became the first such institution in eastern Prince William County with an education program. The two-room brick school was razed on October 24, 1986.⁹⁶

Russell House and Store (27) Junction of Minnieville and Davis Ford Roads This 19th century two-story flagstone covered Russell House represents a type of local architecture predominant in rural Northern Virginia from the mid-19th century to the 1960s. The house, its barn, granary and other outbuildings made up one of the last farms in eastern Prince William County. Originally a hog and dairy farm, it was converted to dairying in the 1950's. The farm buildings were torn down in 1991. On this site also stood the Russell Store, the center of local commercial and social activity in the Bethel, Smoketown, Agnewville and Hoadley sections of the county. The two-story general store, dating from the early 1900s, was operated by Daisy Tavenner Russell from 1917 until 1977. It was razed in 1992.⁹⁷

The Chinn Family (28) Davis Ford and Telegraph Roads Near this site lived six generations of the Chinn family, one of Prince William County's early (black) families. The family traces its heritage to Nance, a slave born in 1794 on the Roe Plantation near present day Lake Ridge. Nancy's daughter Mary Jane married Tom Chinn, a fellow slave and they had eight sons. Following emancipation the Chinns

⁹³ ibid

⁹⁴ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vapwilli/history/historicplaces.html>

⁹⁵ Pamphlet, Confederate Batteries Along The Potomac by Mary Alice Wills

⁹⁶ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vapwilli/history/historicplaces.html>

⁹⁷ ibid

brought 500 acres along Telegraph and Davis Ford Roads. Several members of the family built homes in the area, known as Agnewville, or later Chinntown. One son ran a general store.⁹⁸

“In the Quarterly Conference books for 1903 – 1907 there were 5 churches on the Occoquan Charge: Occoquan, Bethel, Dumfries, Lee Chapel and Cranford Memorial. In 1906, Woodbridge joined the other 5 churches on the Charge. In 1908 to 1916 there were 12 churches on the Charge. The other 6 were Accotink, Parish (?) Hill, Cherry Hill, Sydenstricker (Pohick), Silverbrook and Quantico.”⁹⁹ These churches were served by a traveling minister who would visit on a periodic basis. In between their visits one of the lay persons from the Church would present services or the Church would have Sunday School but no services.

Frequently, Bethel Church has been the place where local residents have come for political rallies, bazaars, dinners, scout meetings, and other gatherings of interest to the community. And through those years, it has remained the place where “God’s Holy Word is preached and expounded.”¹⁰⁰ During the many years of its history, Bethel has been a focal point for the community.



1938 All Day Meeting

From the 1920s through the 1950s, the area was very rural and there was a nearby hog farm, with 3,500 hogs, that was the largest in the area. The Russell house (in 2010 a local restaurant) and store was

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ Research by Susan Tury, St Paul UMC Historian from official church records while Bethel UMC was part of the Occoquan Charge

¹⁰⁰ Newspaper Article, “Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

also nearby.¹⁰¹

In the 1930s, the loyal attendees still numbered only around a dozen. Starting in 1931, once or twice a year, all day meetings were held. Perhaps as many as 150 would attend and bring picnic lunches to eat under the big oaks.¹⁰² “When Rev. A.H. Shumate of Dumfries was given Bethel as part of his charge in 1930, Bethel was still known as a Methodist-Episcopal Church. This was a time of little money, the depression years. Rev. Shumate was a circuit preacher, just as his predecessors were. He met to preach at Bethel twice a month, only earning \$250 a year near the end of his tenure with Bethel in 1945.”¹⁰³

Bethel continued in its importance as a center of community activities where political rallies were held on flat bed wagons and fiddling contests took place. During World War II the Church hosted farewell parties for departing soldiers.¹⁰⁴

In 1943 the first sign was placed onto the Church by Virginia Sullivan who used her egg money to purchase it. The sign was later replaced but this shows the commitment of the community to the Church.¹⁰⁵

The interior of the Bethel church has changed several times, including removal of the slave balcony, adding a back door to enter into the Sunday school building, blocking a rear window, removing paneling and stencils, and replacement of pews and altar rail.¹⁰⁶

Around 1950 the Bethel United Methodist Men (BUMM) started selling Christmas Trees. Originally they went to the mountains and cut and hauled their own trees. This was their major fund raiser to support ministry programs at the Church.

In 1952, the Church received electricity as the chandelier in the sanctuary was replaced with an electric chandelier.¹⁰⁷ The existing building in 2010 didn’t have other modern conveniences like indoor plumbing. It’s likely the original building never had it either. Throughout the years Bethel changed very slowly along with the surrounding areas.

The Sunday school was added in 1957 when some of the oak trees surrounding the Church were felled.¹⁰⁸

The Church was usually served by a Circuit Pastor and for much of its history Bethel UMC was

¹⁰¹ Book, Prince William County, A pictorial History, by D’Anne Evans

¹⁰² *ibid*

¹⁰³ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

¹⁰⁴ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

¹⁰⁵ Newspaper Article, “Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

¹⁰⁶ Handout, Bethel Historical Society Summary

¹⁰⁷ Speech at Historic Dumfries, Virginia, Inc., BETHEL CHURCH, by Janna Lee Murphy Leepson, An address presented at a meeting of Historic Dumfries Virginia, Inc. at the Dumfries Town Hall, January 8, 1981

¹⁰⁸ Newspaper Article, “Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

part of the Dumfries Circuit.¹⁰⁹ Up through 1960, Bethel still didn't have a full time pastor but was served by a pastor who served both Bethel and Silverbrook United Methodist Church. Dumfries, Occoquan, and Woodbridge were other local Churches that were part of the circuit (or charge as it was called) during its history. As the congregations grew or contracted the circuit would be adjusted. This wasn't unusual as the congregation wasn't large enough with sufficient income to support a full time pastor. This would change as the area transitioned from a rural farming community to a suburban area supporting Washington, DC.¹¹⁰



The Bethel Bell in its Frame at 3130 Davis Ford Road

In 1962 the altar and benches replaced by an altar and benches from Claridon Church, Arlington, VA.¹¹¹ In 1968, the Bethel Bell was added to the Church and placed in a white frame at the front of the original Church. The bell is now on display in the front entrance of the new Church. It was acquired by Allie "Dukie" Maddox who acquired it from a church in Arlington, VA. The frame was built by Ralph Clindeinst and Harry Pennington along with some help from other men of the Church.¹¹²

In 1968, the Methodist Church merged with the United Brethern Church and became known as Bethel United Methodist Church, bringing together two strong churches in heritage and membership.¹¹³

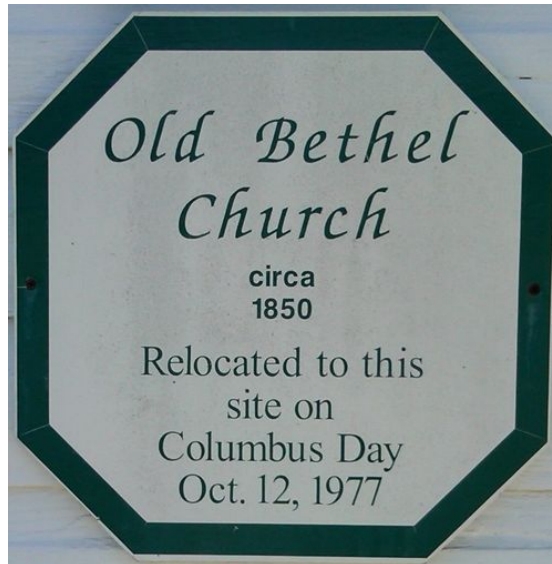
¹⁰⁹ Letter, Raymond Fitzhugh Wrenn, 14 August 1984, to Mrs. Root, regarding Church History

¹¹⁰ Publication, The Methodist Church, Membership Manual, Part I, Church History, Membership Roll, Church Officials, for use on Bethel-Silverbrook Charge, February 1960

¹¹¹ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington

¹¹² Newspaper Article, "Church to mark 125th year, by Eileen Mead, 1975

¹¹³ Publication, History of Bethel United Methodist Church, Prince William County, by Historians: Mrs. Eva Garner and Mrs. Lillian Pennington



Sign on Original Church September 2010



Bethel Church Being Moved

In 1977, the church was threatened with demolition by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). A group of its new neighbors contributed five thousand dollars and a considerable amount of labor to move the church and the building was moved 200 feet from its original location.¹¹⁴ The Church had already built a new building and couldn't afford to move the building so this effort by its neighbors was greatly appreciated.¹¹⁵ The move was completed on Columbus Day, October 12, 1977. The original

¹¹⁴ Book, Prince William: A Past to Preserve, Laurie C. Wieder, Editor, and Keith Adam Jacobson, Historical Commission Publications Chairman

¹¹⁵ Book, Prince William County, A pictorial History, by D'Anne Evans

Church was located on the Occoquan Road which was later re-routed slightly in other areas to become Davis Ford Road and then with other road changes as the area grew became Minnieville Road. Initially Minnieville was a two lane road but was later widened to a six lane road. The straightening and widening of the road was the reason the original Church was moved 200 years to its present site. In 2010, the Church would have been located in the middle of the intersection of Minnieville and Smoketown Roads. Part of the activity of moving the Church was purchase of additional property to compensate for the property that was released for the road project.



<http://www.pwcecondev.org/?gclid=CIKdyMrYsKQCFUmA5QodYDNL0w>



Bethel UMC New Church Building Under Construction in 1977

In 1993, the Seabees of NMCB-23, Army Engineer Center, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5758, commanding officer Cdr. Carl Miller, CEC, USNR, helped renovate the original Church. The Seabees renovated the interior of the building and helped secure the foundation in 1994 also.¹¹⁶



Seabees Relaxing While Working on the Original Church

The building projects weren't without controversy. The new Church building was needed due to expansion and the United Methodist Church national leadership sent an expert to advise the Bethel Membership. His assessment was that the Church lacked the resources and should abandon their efforts. Fortunately, Reverend Parish and the Church Council persisted and the new Church was funded and built.¹¹⁷ In addition, when the original Church was threatened with demolition the Church Council was also split but eventually adopted the position that they wouldn't oppose an organization relocating the original Church and would provide land for it but wouldn't commit any funds towards a move.¹¹⁸ An expansion of the current Fellowship Hall at the new building required removal of a very large, beloved oak tree that served as a meeting location for social dinners, and ice cream and watermelon socials. This caused great "gnashing of teeth" among the congregation with some members leaving the Church. Likewise the sale of the Church Parsonage was also a very controversial event.¹¹⁹

On April 20, 1999, the Bethel Community sponsored the Brown family that was emigrating from Liberia where they escaped the civil war unrest there. Annette Brown had come to the United States two years earlier for political asylum while her Husband Hietha and their ten children lived in a refugee camp in Danane, Ivory Coast. The family was assisted by the Bethel Community who helped lease a house and

¹¹⁶ Letter, Bethel Historical Society, January 21, 1994, to Commanding Officer, NMCB-23

¹¹⁷ 2009 Sermon by Reverend Parish where he related this story from his personal experience. Witnessed by Robin P. Williams

¹¹⁸ 1976 Minutes of the Church Council, several meetings.

¹¹⁹ Information related to Robin P. Williams by Fred Parish, Bethel Pastor, and Wanda Smith, President of Bethel Historical Society in 2008 and 2010, respectively

welcome them to the community.¹²⁰

Still the center of a geographic region of Prince William County, the Church remains the meeting place for the people of the community. But the community is quite different than it was in 1850. The dirt roads are now Smoketown and Minnieville (formerly Davis Ford Road) – paved highways soon to become six lane thoroughfares. Dale City with over 30,000 people and Lake Ridge with a population of approximately 10,000 have suburbanized the area. Another housing development is planned on property surrounding the Church site. On any Sunday morning, the people who worship together in the Bethel United Methodist Church building will have come from all of these housing developments and from the homes along the highways. In fact, the people of Bethel represent a cross section of Eastern Prince William County.¹²¹



The New Church in 2008 by Mark Stout

¹²⁰ Publication, “The Bethel Bell” newsletter, August 1999

¹²¹ Church Directory, Bethel United Methodist Church, Woodbridge, VA, ~1974



The New Bethel Church Entrance in 2009 by Mark Stout



Prize Winning Painting by Haley Sharp in 2009



Bethel Land Deed

Posted in the Original Church

POEM

Old Bethel¹²²

By Woodrow Taylor

It was many years before the Civil War
The folds in this neighborhood said what are we waiting for
It's indeed high time a church was founded
Where the word of God might be expounded

There was much to be done by this Christian band
Mr. Burr Glasscock and wife said they would give the land
To lend the Lord a helping hand
Then there were promised large donations
To be given by the entire congregation

Soon the noise of hammer and saw rang loud and clear
Then an occasional song filled the air
They worked along with real good will
Their dream of a house of God to fulfill

Mr. Hedges, great-grandfather, hewed the sills
He did an excellent job for they are lasting still
All labored hard at this noble task
The Lord answered each prayer for help that was asked

It was a great undertaking for this noble band
For money was very scarce I understand
Those Christian people let nothing block their way
Their dream of success would soon brighten their way

They thought of a gallery so the colored folks would have a place
That they might be able to hear the word of God and learn of his amazing grace

In due time this grand old church was complete
The neighborhood had a place of God where they all could meet
We lack just one thing, they did proclaim
This grand old church must have a name

Then all their heads began to nod
They decided on Bethel, which means "House of God"
This became a meeting place for all both far and near
That's why she lasted so many years

This old church has seen so many things take place
It would be hard to tell them all in such limited space
She proudly listened one morning in 1861
To the noise and thunder of the First Battle of Bull Run

¹²² Poem, "Old Bethel," by Woodrow Taylor

An old churchmen was born a slave
To me he kindly this story gave
He was on his way to this church when he heard the cannon roar
The noise badly frightened him
He thought the world would soon be no more

So he hurried along as fast as he could
When he got here out in the yard the congregation stood
They were all puzzled as they stood in the hot July sun
The next day they learned of the battle we had won

So many things have happened in this house of God
To list them all would be such a huge job
Couples have come here to be married, to them you were no known
But they loved you because you look like the old church back home

Not to tell of some of the old timers who labored and worshipped here
Let's take a trip back into yesteryear

Some of their names have been forgotten as the years passed by
But they are all recorded in that great record book on high

There were the three old maid Glasscock sisters
They always looked so sweet as they came forth to worship always so trim and neat
Their names are all unknown to most of you
They were Molly, Louella and Sue

Then there were three brothers Mahlan – Aquilla and Beauragard
They will all be long remembered for they all labored so hard

Then in later years old names were replaced by those of the new
The name of Mrs. Washburn Arrington, Sherwood Stannell, Ed Strother,
Silas Nelson, Fawkes and Schnapp, to name just a few
They all were so willing to lend a hand in helping you

Then still later on were added to the membership roles
The names of Taylor, Fairbanks, Dean, Pearl, Oliver, Duvall
Mr. And Mrs. George Hedges answered God's call
I do hope no one has been forgotten; It's hard to remember them all

Old church, you have always loaned cheer to those who were distressed
In every way you have always done your best
When Muriel Humphrey School was incomplete
You opened your doors and offered a welcome seat
Then when the Boy Scouts needed a place to go
Once more old Bethel opened her doors

But all our meetings were not for church work
We had our moments of jest; sometimes a political meeting for a fiddling contest

The fiddling contests were most often won by our friend Harvey Puffenbarger
He said he always played a little louder and stronger

Now friends, this is all I can think of just now

I've done my best I do allow
So just keep on coming to church each Sabbath day
Trust in the Lord to guide your ways

Let's close this with a short prayer

Oh Lord be with all who have worshipped here and gone on before
Grant them rest on eternity's share
Bless all who are worshipping here still
Help us in building our new church if it be they will

May there always be a place here
Like unto the days when old Bethel was founded
That the word of the Lord may be expounded

SELECTED BETHEL PHOTOS



Bethel Congregation July 1959



Bethel Congregation circa 1970s



Bethel Membership Easter 2010 by *Owen Lee*



Bethel Bell's Hand Bell Choir Performing



Bethel Holy Humor Sunday 2009



Vacation Bible School 2009