

# **A History of the Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church**

## **Introduction**

*The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein...He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered... (Psalm 111:1,4)*

God has always wanted His people to remember their past. Forgetfulness was often the first step to unfaithfulness. God has made His wonderful works to be remembered. The fourth commandment calls us to remember God's rest following the creation week. Through the Passover ordinance, the Hebrews were to recall their plight in Egypt and God's mighty acts of deliverance. Parents were to tell their children of God's power and provision. David reminds us to *forget not all His benefits*. Similarly, in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ instituted a feast of remembrance of His grace to sinners. All through the Bible, God's people are urged to remember what He has done for them.

This church history is was originally written in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian church. It is a testimony to the gracious providence of God who brought this congregation into existence in 1797.

The Bicentennial Historical Committee was comprised of:

Mr. Charles F. McGill, Chairman

Mrs. Hayes M. Faulkner

Rev. Alan A. Morrow

The origin of Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is part of the rich history of an area once known as the Back Country. Measuring 20 to 160 miles wide, the Back Country extended from the North Carolina line to the Savannah river. Although the region was virtually unoccupied before 1730, by the outbreak of the Revolutionary War a quarter million inhabitants had settled there. The settlers were mostly Scots-Irish - a hardy people who came to America to escape economic difficulties and religious persecution in Ireland. They entered their new country by way of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, or Charleston, South Carolina.

### **Formation of Churches**

Soon after the settlement of the Scotch-Irish in the Back Country, churches were established. The first ministers from the Associate and Reformed Presbyteries in Scotland began coming in the 1750s. The existence of Presbyterian churches in the Carolinas as early as the 1740s is indicated by the arrival of the first Presbyterian minister to the Carolinas in 1742. By 1750 churches had been established in Mecklenberg County. Eventually, Presbyterians settled in the Kings Mountain area and the region of Gaston, York, and Cherokee counties.

Some Presbyterians who worshipped in these churches were of the Old Seceder and Covenanter lines in Scotland. Although they were stricter than their other brethren in the Presbyterian Church, they all met together for worship because of the shortage of ministers. The differences about what was appropriate in worship would set the stage for the establishment of Bethany ARP Church.

### **Differences over Worship**

During the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin reformed church worship to a more simplified form, holding that all worship must be strictly regulated according to the Word of God. The British Puritans developed Calvin's insight somewhat more fully into what became known as the *Regulative Principle of Worship*. According to the principle, nothing can be introduced into worship which is not expressly commanded in Scripture. This Biblical principle was later written into the Westminster Confession of Faith and held by Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland. There, the adherents to this principle believed only the singing of the Psalms without musical accompaniment was appropriate for worship. For about the first 50 years of its existence in America, the Presbyterian church sang Psalms exclusively as well.

However, in the middle of the 18th century, the Presbyterian Church began to question their stand on this issue. In 1753, discussion began as to the possibility of introducing some of the hymns of Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) into the worship service. Watts was an English minister, who some had questions on his teaching on Trinity who became a prolific hymn-writer. He thought the psalms needed "Christianized" and make them speak more plainly to Christians of his day, and he published his own version of psalms and hymns. Some psalms were omitted and others were changed. A few of his hymns were written in praise of Britain. These hymns particularly irritated the Covenanters whose ancestors had suffered greatly under British rule.

Having relaxed their convictions about this matter, the mainline Presbyterian General Assembly officially approved the introduction of Dr. Watts' hymns into the worship of the Presbyterian churches.

This division over the psalm-hymn issue affected the churches which played a part in the formation of Bethany ARP Church - Beersheba (founded 1769), York District, and Long Creek (founded 1780). Before 1793, all Presbyterians in the vicinity of Kings Mountain, including those people sympathetic to the Associate Reformed Church and its beliefs, worshipped together. Around 1793, divisions began to occur in these congregations over the psalm-hymn issue. In the words of Dr. E. E. Boyce, *the harmony of these churches was interrupted by the introduction of Hymns which to a respectable minority of Beersheba was an innovation not*

*to be endured, and consequently led to a division in the ranks.* This respectable minority included those belonging to the Seceder and Covenanter heritage. Tradition has it that some of those who led in singing refused to participate when a hymn was given out. At other times, part of the congregation would leave the building.

At Beersheba, a story is told of a Rev. James Rogers, one of the early ARP ministers, who came to preach for the Psalm-singing group one Sabbath. This was probably around 1794 or 1795. As he arrived, he met another minister, a Rev. McWhorter (a regular Presbyterian), who was the church's pastor at that time. Both claimed the pulpit. Neither wanted to divide the duties. Consequently, McWhorter took the hymn singers and they met in the church building. Rev. Rogers took the Psalm-singing group to a private home. On that day, the Associate Reformed Church was established in York County.

About this same time, the Long Creek Church, several miles to the north, underwent a similar division. These families dissatisfied with Watts' hymns withdrew and united with the Beersheba group to form one congregation. These families saw the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church as their only hope of being able to worship according to their convictions. Therefore, they appointed Andrew Ferguson and John Miller to attend a meeting of the Associate Reformed Synod of the Carolinas at Black River, SC to secure a supply pastor.

### **The Old Kings Mountain Church**

The newly formed congregation built what is known as the old Kings Mountain Church on the south slope of Kings Mountain near Sparrow Springs. The log cabin erected for worship, measuring twenty four by twenty eight feet, was built on a bluff or knoll above a fairly large stream of water known as Love Fork. They worshipped in this cabin for about 18 months.

This site most recently belonged to the Junius Sipe family and in 1972 a commemorative marker was placed there. In 1984, Dr. W. H. F. Kuykendall, professor of Old Testament at Erskine College, conducted an archaeological dig in this area.

During this period, the Sharon ARP church also was formed by a group of psalm singers who withdrew from the Beersheba and Bullocks Creek churches. James Rogers preached at Sharon and organized this congregation in the summer of 1796. Although never officially installed as pastor, Rogers was the first supply preacher for the Kings' Mountain and Sharon churches.

In 1795, the Rev. William Dickson became the first licensed preacher of the Presbytery of the Carolinas. Then in March of 1796, he moved his family from the Abbeville District, S.C., to a farm about 2 miles north of Bethany Church. It was at this time that Mr. Dickson began preaching to the newly assembled flock in the old Kings Mountain church. The log home in which the Dicksons lived is presently housed within a newer home located off of Henry's Knob road.

The names of those families from Beersheba and Long Creek that formed the nucleus of the Old Kings Mountain Church were: William McElwee, Sr (ruling elder) and his sons, John McElwee and William McElwee, William Henry, Alexander Henry, James Henry, James Crawford, William Crawford, Francis Rea, James Dunn, Joseph Carroll, John Oates, and James Blackwood. Other families may have included the Sarvices, Falls, Fergusons, Beatties, and Wilsons. Tombs of many members from these families may be found in our cemetery.

### **Formation of Bethany and Pisgah**

Sometime between May of 1796 and January of 1797, the old Kings Mountain church *gave up her life at the birth to twin daughters, Pisgah and Bethany*. Slow travel, poor roads, and the widespread expanse of the congregation were definite factors in this peaceful split. Pisgah built a house of worship on the north side of the mountain. Bethany was erected at a *stand* (brush arbor) in 1796 and organized at that stand in 1797. The first elders of the Bethany church were: William McElwee, Sr, Samuel Lesslie, James Crawford, Sr., and Alexander Henry.

Though there is some question over the exact sequence of events in the year 1796, it seems that in the summer of that year, Sharon, Bethany, and Carmel churches united in calling the Rev. William Dickson. It is quite probable that this call also included Pisgah. The Rev. Dickson was ordained and installed as pastor of Bethany and Sharon, York Co, SC, and Pisgah, Gaston Co, NC on June 5, 1797. This is the date we have chosen as the date our origin. According to records, however, there were worship services in a brush arbor here sometime before this, probably as early as 1796.

When one crosses Highway 161 at the north end of our cemetery and observes the deep ravine and small lake among the trees, it is not difficult to imagine the original site where the founding members of Bethany first met for worship.

### **William Dickson - Bethany's First Pastor**

William Dickson, a native of Ireland who had emigrated with his family to this country in 1793, was the first pastor of Bethany. In 1795, he had been licensed and became a stated supply at the Long Cane and Cedar Springs churches in SC. One year later, he received a call to the churches in the area of Kings Mountain.

William Dickson continued as pastor after the division of the old Kings Mountain church. He was a faithful minister and seemed to get along well with his people. The demands on him were significant. In 1798, he was one of only 8 ministers in the Presbytery who were available to serve 43 societies. The Rev. Dickson rode the circuit to serve his congregations. In 1819 there were a total of 150 families and 350 members in his entire charge. Dr. Bob Elliot writes, *In those days the office of the minister was no easy job, either physically or mentally. Mr. Dickson's pastoral work and church responsibilities carried him all over Chester County, SC, to Knob Creek in Cleveland County, and often as far west as New Sterling near Statesville, and sometimes to Due West. All of this travelling was by horseback across rivers and wide expanses of uninhabited territory.*

While the Rev. Dickson enjoyed an amiable relationship with his people, tensions arose between him and the Associate Reformed Presbytery. About the year 1802, he and the Rev. McMullen withdrew from the Associate Reformed Church and affiliated with the Associate Presbyterian Church. The position of the Associate Reformed Church on frequent communion and its decision to dispense with days of fasting and thanksgiving in connection with the sacrament were the reasons they gave for their withdrawal. Close to twenty other Associate Reformed congregations joined them and united with this Associate Presbytery. An anti-slavery resolution passed by the Associate Presbyterian Synod in 1831 led these congregations to return to the fold of the Associate Reformed Church.

The Rev. Dickson retired in 1828 and died three years later. The 1903 Centennial History records, *Father Dickson built wiser than he knew. There are now within the bounds he cultivated some 13 Psalm-singing congregations*. A saying attributed to Rev. Dickson is: *One may be honest and be a Christian, but he cannot be a Christian and not be honest.*

Following the death of the Rev. Dickson, the Rev. Joseph Banks supplied Bethany and Pisgah from 1830-1833. According to Dr. Boyce, *abolition sentiments made his stay uncomfortable and he returned to the more genial climes of the north.*

## Further Growth and Progress

In June of 1841, Dr. R. C. Grier was ordained and installed as pastor of Bethany and Pisgah. Though the churches grew under his ministry, he had larger gifts for leadership and service. In 1848, he resigned to become President of Erskine College. At age 31, he was the youngest college president in South Carolina at that time.

At hearing the news of his death in Due West in 1871, a letter of tribute was sent by Dr. E. E. Boyce in behalf of the Bethany congregation. In part, it says, *We, the congregation of Bethany, cherish the memory of Rev. R. C. Grier, D. D., as most dear to us all. This great and good man...went out and came in among us so pleasantly during the whole of his seven years of ministry here that our hearts were knit to him...His hold upon our affections was so strong, our confidence in his wisdom, prudence, and piety was so great that with us it was no trivial matter when called upon to give up forever such a rich and savory ministry; a mind so fertile, a heart so kind, a soul so Christ-like; a ministry that attracted those without and fed those within; no wonder we yielded reluctantly and with bitter complaints against the act of Synod.*

The Rev. E. E. Boyce was called by Bethany and Pisgah. He was installed on June 28, 1849 and served until 1885. The Rev. Boyce was the last minister to serve both Bethany and Pisgah. During his long and fruitful ministry, Rev. Boyce laid foundations for several new congregations in this area. In 1859, Bethany statistics record 95 white members and 11 black members.

This growth led the church to erect a third building in 1876. This white frame structure stood about 100 feet west of the present building and bore a close resemblance to the one built at Pisgah and Bethel Presbyterian (which can still be seen on Hwy 557 east of Clover) during this period. The cornerstone is still visible on our front lawn.

A Class 2 Charter was issued to Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church on March 7, 1876. Charter members were: M. C. Lorance, William Plaxico, T. P. Whitesides, J. L. McGill, and William Leslie. The Charter was signed at the York County Court House by J. F. Wallace, C. C. This Charter is still effective.

Dr. Boyce passed from this life on November 5, 1902. Of him it is written, *His preaching was flash lights on the text, striking, original, intensely practical, intensely interesting and helpful. His pastoral work was exemplary, never forgetting he was an ambassador, always mingling gravity with innocent gaiety, and trying to make every common place incident produce a spiritual impression. He was eminently spiritually-minded, a peace-maker, and a wise counselor. His home was a model. Grace and nature made this distinguished servant a Nathaniel in guileness, a John in loveliness, a Moses in meekness.*

In October 1886, shortly after the Rev. R. M. Stevenson began preaching at Bethany, the Ladies Society was formed with the following 16 charter members: Mrs. Violet Faulkner, Mrs. Rosa Leslie, Mrs. Agnes Leslie, Mrs. Emeritta Lowery, Mrs. Jane Oates, Mrs. Margaret McElwee, Mrs. Belle McGill, Mrs. Emma Stevenson, Mrs. Sallie Faulkner, Mrs. Belle Leslie, Mrs. Mattie Love, Mrs. Maggie Oates, Mrs. Mattie McElwee, Mrs. Mattie McGill, Mrs. Margaret Sparrow, and Mrs. W. B. Stroup. The first officers were: Mrs. Agnes Leslie, President, Mrs. W. B. Stroup, Vice President, Mrs. Margaret McElwee, Treasurer, and Mrs. Mattie Love, Secretary.

The Rev. Stevenson was formally installed at Bethany on March 13, 1887. Stevenson was licensed at this church upon graduation from Erskine Seminary at age 19 but was not called for 7 years. Just prior to the call, he was supplying congregations in the area. The call was for 3/4 of his time, a salary of \$450, and a parsonage. During his ministry, Crowder's Creek and Clover churches were organized. He was installed as pastor of Crowder's Creek on May 28, 1892 and at Clover ARP Church on November 3, 1893. Members from Bethany

helped organize both of these congregations. Dr. Stevenson divided his time among the three congregations, giving most of his time to Bethany.

In 1891, the first deacons were elected to serve at Bethany. Major T. P. Whitesides, John E. Love, R. N. McElwee, J. L. McGill, and L. A. McGill were recorded as deacons at Bethany. It is around this time the first organ was purchased for use in worship.

In 1911, the pastorate of Dr. Stevenson came to an end when he resigned and moved to Due West where he became editor of *The Associate Reformed Presbyterian* and the ARP Adult Quarterly. He held these positions until his death in 1941. One of his most helpful publications was entitled, *Studies In Our Church History*. Published in 1915, it was a concise digest of our history and institutions, designed for use in the Sabbath Schools. He also wrote a pamphlet defending the singing of psalms only in worship, a copy of which we have in the Church library.

On July 5, 1912, the Rev. W. P. Grier was installed as pastor of Bethany, Crowder's Creek, and Clover churches. The Rev. Grier was a grandson of Dr. R. C. Grier who had been pastor here earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was in 1914 that the present house of worship was constructed. There are some interesting facts associated with its construction. Approximately 42,000 board feet of lumber were used in construction, most of it donated and hewn by church members. The bricks were made a few hundred yards south of the church by a Mr. Falls of Kings Mountain, NC with assistance from the deacons. The windows in the new building cost \$452.96. The furniture was purchased for \$1,350 and the pews and pulpit furniture were paid for by the Ladies Society. The furnace cost \$705.75. Total cost of construction was somewhere between \$12,000 and \$14,000. This building was completed and dedicated in 1915. The mortgage was burned in 1920. Members of the building committee were: J. L. McGill, Chairman, Emmett W. Pursley, R. N. Plaxico, W. M. McCarter, W. D. Leslie, D. T. Quinn, T. E. McMackin, M. P. Faris, and R. A. Whitesides. The first marriage in the church was that of Miss Mattie Ratterree to Mr. Shelton J. West of Camden, SC. Their son, John R. West, later became Governor of South Carolina.

During the long ministry of Dr. Grier, the Lord blessed Bethany with significant growth. Over the next 30 years, the membership of Crowders Creek, Clover, and Bethany churches nearly tripled. At homecoming in 1931, total membership of Bethany had reached probably its highest number since its formation at 460 members. At one time, it was reportedly the largest rural church in the denomination. Dr. Grier served these 3 churches faithfully during two World Wars and was known to have held prayer meetings for the servicemen in those years. In 1946, he resigned from Bethany and Crowder's Creek and gave full-time service to Clover ARP Church until his death in 1952.

Dr. Grier was followed by the Rev. Murray W. Griffith who accepted a call to Bethany and Crowders Creek on May 5, 1946. The manse was built that same year and in 1947, the church celebrated her 150th anniversary. Dr. W. P. Grier preached the sermon on this historic occasion. In 1948, during the Rev. Griffith's pastorate, the Frank Plaxco family provided for the purchase of a new organ. The following year, the Rev. Griffith accepted a call to the Park Avenue ARP Church in Charlotte. He was the only pastor to serve Bethany and Crowder's Creek jointly.

A sad event took place at Bethany in the late 1940s. The ARP Synod had voted to permit local churches to use hymns as well as psalms in public worship. Individual congregations could make their own decision in this matter. A division and rupture over this issue occurred at Bethany. This led to the departure of a significant number of members who organized the Oakdale Presbyterian Church in 1951.

Dr. G.L. Kerr and other ministers supplied Bethany until the spring of 1952 when the Rev. George S. Lauderdale became pastor. Under his faith, evangelistic zeal, and leadership the church grew in number. Prison ministries were established during his pastorate. Also begun were Fishermen's Clubs, an evangelistic outreach for young men. Rev. Lauderdale served for 5 years and was able to bring about healing and new growth. Ill health led him to resign in 1957.

The Rev. F. W. Sherrill preached his first sermon at Bethany on Mother's Day, 1957. He moved into the community on the last week of July of that year. Having previously been examined, Rev. Sherrill accepted the congregational call and was installed as pastor of Bethany on December 1, 1957. He continued to serve faithfully for 17 years, retiring in 1973.

In 1959, during Rev. Sherrill's ministry, an educational building annex housing the Pastor's study, Ladies' Parlor, Church Library, and six classrooms on the second floor, an assembly room, and kitchen facilities were built at a cost of \$18,000. It was used for the first time on January 5, 1960. Rev. Sherrill preached the sermon for the mortgage burning at a Homecoming service on July 9, 1961. Others who participated in the ceremony were: W. Lee Gettys, John L. McGill, Jr., W. S. Grayson, and C. Pressly Barry.

Reports by older members on the character, scholarship, and ministry of Dr. Sherrill have been universally favorable. In Synod's memorial tribute, it was noted that *Dr. Sherrill loved to sing and was blessed with an excellent tenor voice. He was a gifted preacher, a faithful pastor, and one who lived the Word of God.* Following his retirement, Rev. Sherrill earned a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the School of Religion, Evangelical College and Seminary, Pacific Western University.

Bethany was the first pastorate for the next four ministers after Rev. Sherrill's retirement. The Rev. Calvin C. Jett served Bethany as pastor from 1974 to 1977. Features of his ministry included establishment of the young adult class, prayer chains, home Bible studies, discipleship ministry, and emphasis on missions. A baby nursery was begun and children's sermons became part of the morning worship.

The Rev. William L. Barron served Bethany from 1978 to 1981. During his ministry, world missions continued to be emphasized. The young adult class continued to grow raising money for missions and other benevolences. A church newsletter, the *Bethany Christian Messenger*, was begun. During Billy's pastorate, the congregation began travelling as a group to Bonclarken for an annual worship service and picnic. Members also attended Bill Gothard's Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts.

Bethany also was the first charge for the Rev. David W. Setzer who served from 1981 to 1984. David was an amiable and effective leader of the congregation. He worked well with young people. During his ministry, the pews were cushioned and floor carpeted.

The Rev. Joseph W. Everett, III was pastor of Bethany from 1985 to 1991. While Joe was pastor, a Men's Club was organized and continued to be active for several years. Sabbath evening youth classes also were begun and a rotary system was initiated for election of Deacons. The stained-glass windows in the sanctuary also were covered with a protective vinyl in 1987. Upon his death in 1993, a memorial tribute composed by the General Synod noted that *Joe was an excellent expository preacher, the result of continual study of the Scriptures. He was an avid reader and was able to speak intelligently with his parishioners and friends on almost any subject. His love for God was strongly evident in his preaching and in his life.*

The Rev. Alan A. Morrow was installed at Bethany in June, 1992 and served us faithfully until his retirement in January 2017. Just prior to his arrival, the manse was enlarged. Missions continues to be an emphasis. Beginning in 1995, two missionary families began to be supported by the congregation on an annual basis - the Rev. and Mrs. Frank vanDalen and the Rev. and Mrs. Scott Moore. We also began a summer youth mission to Sneedville, Tennessee that continues to this day. New additions to the church sanctuary include an Allen

organ purchased in 1995 and new pews in 1997. In 2009 the church adopted the use of Biblically-based and theologically-correct man-made hymns from the Trinity Hymnal.

In October of 2017 the Bethany Church welcomed our current pastor, the Rev. Benjamin P. Glaser. Rev. Glaser and his family served the Ellisville Presbyterian Church, ARP in Ellisville, Mississippi from 2010 to 2017 before coming on the field at Bethany. The current membership sits at 101 Communicant Members and 17 Non-Communicant Members.

### **Bethany's Vision**

Over the years Bethany has had a favorable impact on this and other communities through the establishment of several other churches and schools. In total 18 local congregations can trace their lineage back to Bethany. In 1843, several families left this congregation to form the Smyrna ARP Church.

About 1881, Robert A. Black and J. J. L. Gill, both members of Bethany Church, went to Lamar county, Texas. The record says that *they spied out the land and sent back a good report on the farm land; how cheaply it could be bought.* A special train from York County carried 18 members of Bethany on this trip. Mrs. Sam Falls, one of the group, said that there were a total of 74 persons in the group travelling to Texas, 71 white and 3 negroes. These men and women founded the Chicote ARP Church. It grew to 89 members. In 1896 it entertained the ARP Synod. This was a five-day meeting, and all of the townspeople helped the Chicote Church accommodate the large crowd.

In total 18 local congregations can trace their lineage back to Bethany. In 1843, several families left this congregation to form the Smyrna ARP Church. Bethany has also been instrumental in the formation of the following congregations: York (1853), Boyce Memorial (1876), Hickory Grove (1886), Crowder's Creek (1892), Clover (1893), four churches in Arkansas (1853-1893), four churches in Texas (1865-1883), Gastonia, (1894), Garrison Memorial, (1898); Linden, (1911); and Blacksburg (1923). All of these are ARP Churches.

During Rev. Stevenson's pastorate the Bethany Presbyterial High School was established as a boarding school in 1902. Male students lived in a building near the site of the present manse. Female students resided in the home later owned by the Graysons (the white house next to the education building). Four boys lived in the old Session House. This school continues today as the Bethany Elementary School.

In 1901, Linwood women's college was founded in Gastonia with the help of Pisgah and Bethany. The Rev. A. T. Lindsay was President of the College and Pastor of Pisgah from 1901 to 1914. He resigned in 1914 to give full time to the Presidency of Linwood College until it closed in 1923.

Bethany also has produced several ministers and missionaries over its history: Revs. McElwee, Quinn, Ford, Boyce Grier, Mark Grier, James Talbert, W. P. Grier, Jr., George L. McGill, Jr., Chris Sherrill, and Ian Wise.

Adjacent to the present building is the Bethany cemetery, resting place for our first pastor, the Rev. William Dickson, and most of his family. It is reported that the earliest grave belongs to one of his children who died in 1796. Several of the early leaders of the church, including some of its founding elders, are buried here. The Rev. E. E. Boyce has two children buried in our cemetery. Veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War Between the States, the War of 1812, the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam are also interred in this cemetery. The cemetery is supported through gifts of generous friends collected each year during the Homecoming Service. A local history of the Bethany Cemetery was compiled in 1983 by Joseph E. Hart, Jr. and is available in our Church library as well as the Clover Public Library.



## **In Conclusion**

With the psalm writer, we can say, *The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad* (Psalm 126:3). Bethany is a congregation steeped in a rich history. It has been a church blessed by God over many years. Like its namesake, it has been a place where the Lord Jesus Christ has come to visit and display His lifesaving power, a home where the saints have served Him and held communion at His feet. His people have been faithful to the Word and loyal to the work.

Let us be thankful to God for what He has done at Bethany over 200 years. We are built on the foundation of faithful pastors and people.

## **Bethany's Pastors**

Down through its history, God has blessed Bethany with many godly pastors - hard-working, self-sacrificing men of deep faith, humility, and compassion with a knowledge of His Word. Each minister of Bethany has had his own particular combination of talents and skills and made unique contributions to the life of this congregation. These brief sketches cannot begin to fully do justice to the impact of these men have had on the lives of the members of Bethany.

**Rev. William Dickson** was born in was born in Cookstown, County Tyrone, Ireland about 1760. He was educated at Glasgow, Scotland and studied theology under a very famous professor, John Brown of Haddington. About this time he was seized by a British recruiting ship and press gang on passage between Ireland and Scotland. Here compelled to do service as a common sailor for several months, his discharge was eventually secured through the influence of an Irish nobleman. Mr. Dickson, a teacher, immigrated with his family to South Carolina in 1793. The next year he was received by the A.R. Presbytery of the Carolinas and Georgia, completing his theological studies under the Rev. Peter McMullen, an Associate Reformed minister in Due West, SC. In 1795, he was licensed to preach by this same Presbytery. From 1797 to his death in 1831, he labored faithfully at Bethany and Pisgah. He and his wife, Martha, had 3 children.

**Rev. Robert Calvin Grier, D.D.**, was born March 2, 1817, in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina, in the bounds of the Sardis congregation, the pastoral charge of his father, the Rev. Isaac Grier. His father was the first Presbyterian minister born in the State of Georgia. R. C. Grier began his theological studies under his father and completed them at Erskine Theological Seminary. He was licensed by the First Presbytery in April 1839 and was ordained and installed pastor over Bethany and Pisgah congregations in June 1841. This was his first pastoral charge. In 1847, he resigned to become President of Erskine College. For the remainder of his life he labored in Due West as pastor of the Due West Church and as President and Professor of the College. Dr. Grier's death was on March 30, 1871. He and his wife, Barbara, had 11 children.

**Rev. Ebenezer Erskine Boyce, D.D.**, was born in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina on December 12, 1820. Following graduation from Erskine Seminary, he began some early work in Virginia, West Tennessee and Kentucky. He was ordained pastor of Bethany and Pisgah in 1849. Dr. Boyce is noteworthy for having the longest pastorate in the history of Bethany ARP Church, 36 years. This was his first and only ministry and it continued until 1885 after which he continued as pastor at Pisgah until 1893. Dr. Boyce departed this life on November 5, 1902. The entire General Synod, then meeting in Gastonia, NC, attended and conducted his funeral. He was married twice and had several children.

**Rev. Robert Milton Stevenson, D.D.**, was born in the bounds of New Hope congregation, Fairfield County, South Carolina on November 20, 1960. His seminary training was taken at Erskine Seminary. Having been licensed by First Presbytery in 1880, Rev. Stevenson began preaching in Winnsboro, South Carolina. From 1882 until 1886, he served several churches in Virginia. In 1886, he took up the duties of stated supply of

Kings Mountain and Bethany churches in South Carolina. On May 13, 1887, Rev. Stevenson was installed as a part time pastor of Bethany. In 1892, he was installed as part time pastor at Crowder's Creek and in 1893, as part time pastor at Clover. To these three churches he ministered until 1911, when he became Editor-in-Chief of the *Associate Reformed Presbyterian* in Due West, South Carolina, a position he held until his retirement in 1941. Dr. Stevenson died on December 3, 1942. He and his wife, Emma, had 6 children.

**Dr. William Pressly Grier, D.D.**, was born at Due West on December 26, 1887 and attended local schools there. He attended Erskine College where he distinguished himself as an athlete in baseball and tennis. Following graduation from Erskine, he taught for a brief period in Tennessee. He graduated from Erskine Seminary in 1912 and was licensed to preach that same year by the Second Presbytery. On July 5, 1912, he was ordained by First Presbytery at Bethany ARP Church and installed as pastor of Bethany, Clover, and Crowder's Creek churches. Under Dr. Grier's leadership, these churches grew in number significantly. In 1934, Erskine College conferred upon him the degree of D. D. In 1946, Dr. Grier resigned from Bethany and became full time pastor at Clover until his death in 1952. He and his wife, Nellie, had 5 children.

**Rev. Murray White Griffith** was born in Mecklenberg County on August 10, 1905 and raised in the bounds of the Ebenezer ARP Church. Following graduation from Erskine College, he taught and later worked for Southern Railway in Virginia. With a desire to be a foreign missionary, Mr. Griffith entered Erskine Seminary and graduated in 1931. Though he did not enter the mission field, he did serve several pastorates in South Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. These labors continued until the spring of 1946 when he was called to be pastor of Bethany and Crowder's Creek churches. In May 1949, Rev. Griffith accepted a work in Charlotte at the Parkwood Avenue Church in the old PCUS denomination. Rev. Griffith departed this life on August 1, 1973. He and his wife, Wilma, had 4 children.

**Rev. George Seebert Lauderdale** was born on April 6, 1929 in Winnsboro, South Carolina and was raised in Lexington, Virginia in an ARP Church pastored by his father. Following graduation from Erskine College, he worked for the Virginia Department of Highways for a short period. Spiritual influences in his life which he understood as God's call led him to enter Erskine Seminary. He graduated in 1952. On July 27 of that same year, he was installed as pastor of Bethany. Under leadership, the church grew in number. Poor health led him to resign in 1957. In June of that year he accepted a call to the Ebenezer ARP Church in Lexington, Virginia. Rev. Lauderdale remains active in ministerial pursuits today. He has directed the missionary organization, *Intercession for Israel*, for a number of years. He also has served on the founding board of the Christian Broadcasting Network. His poetic talents are evident in the many Scripture rhymes which he has written and published. He and his wife, Sally, had 3 children.

**Rev. Forrest William Sherrill, STD**, was born on October 17, 1904 in Iredell County, North Carolina. His mother died when he was a child. He and his brothers grew up in the Dunlap Orphanage in Tipton County, Tennessee. Dr. Sherrill attended Bryson College and graduated from Erskine College in 1930. Two years later, he graduated from Erskine Seminary. In 1933, he was ordained to the ministry by First Presbytery in Gastonia, North Carolina. His early pastorates included Prosperity in South Carolina, Broad Creek in Virginia. He also served churches in Lincoln, Tennessee, Blacksburg, South Carolina, Cotton Plant, Mississippi, and Stony Point - New Amity - Elk Shoals field in North Carolina. In 1957, he became the pastor of the Bethany ARP Church, preaching his first sermon on Mother's Day of that year. In July, he moved his family into the community and was installed in December 1957. Dr. Sherrill's ministry at Bethany lasted for 17 years. He retired in 1973 and continued to attend services faithfully until his death in 1986. He and his wife, Kathryn, had 8 children.

**Rev. Calvin Churchill Jett** was born in Batesville, Arkansas. He attended King College in Bristol, Tennessee and later prepared for the ministry at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Following graduation, he was issued a call from Bethany. Calvin was installed at Bethany, his first church, in July, 1974 and served until December, 1977. From 1978-1982, he served Calvin Presbyterian Church in Marion, NC and

since 1982, has been pastor of the Story Memorial Presbyterian Church in that same city. He and his wife, Susan, have 4 children.

**Rev. William Langley Barron** was born in York, SC and raised in the York ARP Church. Following graduation from the University of South Carolina, he pursued theological training at Erskine Theological Seminary, graduating in 1978. Billy served Bethany, his first pastorate, from March, 1978 to March, 1981. Other churches he has served include the Lakeland ARP Church (now Shepherd Road) in Lakeland, Florida (1981-1984), Ebenezer ARP Church in Charlotte, NC (1984-1990), and Boyce Memorial ARP Church in Kings Mountain, NC (1990-1994). Since 1995, he has been pastor of Faith ARP Church in Merritt Island, Florida. He and his wife, Sissy, have 5 children.

**Rev. David Webb Setzer** was born in Rock Hill, SC and grew up in the Southern Baptist Church. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina. His preparation for the ministry was undertaken at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Erskine Theological Seminary. Prior to the ministry, David worked as an Insurance salesman and for United Parcel Service. His first pastorate was Bethany where he served from September, 1981 until September, 1984. Following his departure from Bethany, David served the Trinity ARP Mission in Columbus, Georgia and currently is pastor of the Centennial ARP Church in Columbia, SC. He and his wife, Carol, have 4 children.

**Rev. Joseph Walker Everett, III** was born in Columbia, SC, the son of an ARP minister who served the First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill. Joe graduated from Rock Hill High School and following college worked for a time with Young Life in the Rock Hill area. This ministry was instrumental in leading him to prepare for pastoral ministry. He graduated from Erskine Theological Seminary in 1980. From 1985 until 1991, Joe pastored the Bethany ARP Church. During the next two years, he lived with his mother in Rock Hill and supplied various pulpits in the Carolinas, including a term as Interim Pastor of the Pleasant Hill ARP Church near Lancaster, SC. On November 13, 1993, the Lord called Joe home at the youthful age of 44.

**Rev. Alan Arthur Morrow** was our pastor from 1992-2017, having been called to Bethany in 1992. Born and raised in Ogdensburg, New York, Alan grew up in the United Presbyterian Church. Following graduation from the State University of New York, he moved to Bartow, Florida in 1972 and began work with a civil engineering firm. There he came into contact with the ARP Church. Two years later, he and his wife moved to Jackson, Mississippi where he began preparation for the ministry at Reformed Theological Seminary. Following graduation in 1980, he served the Elsberry ARP Church in Elsberry, Missouri (1980-1983) and the first Presbyterian Church in Frostproof, Florida (1983-1991). He and his wife, Delby, are parents of four grown children and two grandchildren.

**Rev. Benjamin Paul Glaser** was born in Clarksburg, WV and has served us since October of 2017. He was born and raised in the mountains of West Virginia, later serving in the United States Marine Corps on active duty from 1998-2002. Following graduation from the University of Pittsburgh in 2005, he prepared for the ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with additional coursework at Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary completing his studies in the spring of 2009. He is currently completing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Erskine Theological Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Ellisville Presbyterian Church, ARP, in Ellisville, Mississippi from 2010-2017, his first call. He and his wife Brandy are the parents of four children.