

## BEULAH CHURCH -- 125th ANNIVERSARY

Rehobeth Methodist was the first house of worship to be built in this immediate area. It was located on what is now Route 604, near the home of the late Mrs. Wilda Bird. Both Methodists and Presbyterians worshipped there.

In 1860 Dr. William Price was the first Presbyterian minister to hold regular services and was the leading spirit in the organization of a Presbyterian church in this area. His dream was not realized until 1873 when Lexington Presbytery in Staunton appointed Revs. C.H. See, G.B. Strickler, and W. T. Price, a committee to visit Rehobeth Church, administer the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, and if the way seemed clear, to organize a Presbyterian Church.

This committee met at the appointed place on Friday June 6, 1873. Morning and afternoon services were held and on Saturday, June 7, 1873 a church was duly organized under the name of Rehobeth Church. J. Kenny Campbell was elected, ordained and installed as the first ruling elder of the new church.

Before too long, however, instead of the Rehobeth Church, the Presbyterians were holding services at what was known as "THE HALL". Mrs. D.V. Ruckman and Mrs. W.M. Campbell were instrumental in stimulating interest in a new church building that would be big enough to accommodate all of the many people who lived in the community at that time. The Methodists were also thinking of building a new church but they couldn't decide upon a building site. It must have gotten pretty nasty because two men from the Methodist Church, Anson Wade and Alex Gilmore left and offered their support to the Presbyterians if they agreed to build a church that would be a union of the Methodists and Presbyterians. By doing this they stood a better chance of building a really large church that could accommodate everyone and the unity with a sister denomination was very appealing.

D.V. Ruckman gave 2 acres for the church lot. Charles Wade was appointed chairman of the building committee and the other members were D. V. Ruckman, John W. Bird, and Anson Wade. The foundation was four white oak sills, great logs hewed from the largest, straightest trees available, one sill to a tree, cut about four feet longer than dimensions of the building. Sills were at least 12 inches square and hewed with a broad-ax by Charles Wade and Adam McGuffin.

Most of the lumber came from Dunmore, West Virginia. Newt Lowry did some of the sawing on an old style up and down saw, as there were no circular saws at that time. Hemlock was used for the construction and was purchased for \$10 a thousand.

Construction of the church building was begun in November, 1876 and was completed in a little more than a year. The size of the completed building was 32 x 48

feet and would seat comfortably 380 people. The first roof was shingled but in later years was replaced by a metal roof. The hardware and nails were furnished by S.B. Rexrode. The workmen on the building were Sid Ruckman, George Ervin, Bird Howdyshell, Tim Shultz, Filmore Campbell, James R. Ervin, Newt Lowry and Adam McGuffin. During the building of the church Mr. McGuffin nailed a picture of the sweetheart, Maggie Erwin, that he had been forbidden to marry by her brother, behind the weather boarding. Years later the old tin picture was found when the educational building was erected.

Mr. Sidney Ruckman, the architect under whose supervision Beulah Church was built, designed and built a beautiful and unusual pulpit from walnut and cherry wood. It was ornamented with carvings shaped with the pen knife and fitted together like mosaics. He was assisted by George Ervin. The pulpit stands today just as it was designed for the new church in the gap.

D.V. Ruckman made arrangements for purchasing the organ, which was a Mason and Hamlin, and also contributed a large part of the cost. It was hauled from Staunton, on a spring wagon, to the site of the new church.

Organists who have served Beulah Church are Miss Annie Patterson, Mrs. E.A. Wade, Mrs. Lollie Campbell, Mrs. D.O. Bird, Mrs. N. J. Doyle, Mrs. F. A. Doyle, Mrs. Clyde Harold, Mrs. Emory Crummett, Carolyn Hooke Mauzy, Mrs. C.S. Dever, and our present organist/pianist Richard Simmons.

On February 17, 1878, a congregational meeting was held in the new church, pursuant to notice given, for the purpose of selecting a name for this church. Following the sermon and benediction, Col. Anson C. Wade was called to preside. Whereupon J. K. Campbell moved that the church be called Mill Gap church and D.V. Ruckman moved "BEULAH" and requested Rev. Laird to read the passage from Isaiah: 62:4 THOU SHALT NO MORE BE TERMED DESOLATE BUT THOU SHALT BE CALLED HEPHZIBAH AND THY LAND BEULAH FOR JEHOVAH DELIGHTETH IN THEE". a vote was taken as to which of these names should be selected, resulting in the choosing of Beulah, by a vote less seven of being unanimous. The church was there upon named Beulah.

Beulah Church was dedicated on June 3, 1878, the joint property of the Presbyterian and Methodist church, South. The cost of the building was \$1800.00 and there was \$290.00 still owing on the day of the dedication, but the entire debt was liquidated by the offering on that day.

The following is a register of the pastors who have served Beulah:

|  |           |
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| Rev. A.F. Laird                              | 1877-1882 |
| Rev. A.W. Ruff (Died while serving 12/21/84) | 1883-1884 |

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|---|-----------|
| Rev. D.M. Layton                            | 1885-1889 |
| Rev. H.R. Smith                             | 1891-1896 |
| Rev. M.W. Woodworth                         | 1898-1899 |
| Rev. C.J. Boppell                           | 1900-1902 |
| Rev. J.G. Reveley                           | 1904-1905 |
| Rev. L.M. Moffett                           | 1906-1909 |
| Purcell (supplied for several months)       | 1912      |
| Rev. B.L. Wood                              | 1915-1920 |
| Rev. J.A. Mawhinney                         | 1921-1927 |
| Rev. J.T. Williams                          | 1927-1929 |
| C.D. Denham (summer supply)                 | 1930      |
| Rev. G.F. Houck, Jr.                        | 1931-1936 |
| Rev. J.W. Bolick                            | 1937-1940 |
| Rev. W.A. Murray                            | 1940-1941 |
| Rev. T.O. Bird                              | 1941-1942 |
| Rev. A.W. Wood                              | 1942-1944 |
| Rev. Roy Smith                              | 1946-1950 |
| Douglas Paulson                             | 1951-1952 |
| Robert Blummer                              | 1952-1953 |
| Ray R. Hanson, Jr.                          | 1953-1954 |
| Rev. George Rector                          | 1955-1956 |
| Sygman Rhee (student supply pastor)         | 1958      |
| Dr. W.O. Rose                               | 1960      |
| William R. Goodman, Jr. (student supply)    | 1960      |
| Rev. A. E. Johnson                          | 1961-1963 |
| John Jennings (Student assistant - summers) | 1961-1962 |
| Rev. Thompson B. Southall                   | 1966-1970 |
| Rev. G. Willard Gray                        | 1973-1979 |
| Rev. Sara Payne                             | 1980-1982 |
| Rev. C. William Cox                         | 1983-1995 |
| David Troupe                                | 1995      |
| Rev. J. William (Bill) Moore                | 1996-     |

The manse was built at the same time as the church by Sidney Ruckman. It consisted of four rooms and a shed, the latter being used for the kitchen. The house was built at one end of a two acre lot. The original manse faced east and the road ran on the east side of it. Years later the road was changed and the house no longer faced the road. It was decided that they would have the house moved. In the process of moving it the whole house came down. They salvaged what they could and built a new and larger manse. In 1960 Lexington Presbytery made Beulah Church part of the Monterey Group and as the building was no longer used as a manse, it was sold and is now privately owned.

There has been one outpost under the supervision of Beulah Church. The

building that was formerly the Campbell School House and is located in the Valley Center area, was bought for \$50.00. It was deeded outright as a chapel of Beulah Church and on May 18, 1902 it was dedicated as Baraka Chapel. In March of 1944, Baraka Chapel was sold to Rev. Edgar Potts, who was at that time, pastor of the Central Methodist Church in Staunton, Virginia. The Potts family have since used it as a summer home.

Work was begun on the addition to the church of Sunday School rooms and recreational facilities in mid-May of 1957 and was completed in early Fall, with the exception of indoor plumbing and furnishings which have been done at different intervals. We now have a completed addition, heated electrically and a fully equipped kitchen. The sanctuary has also been converted to electric heat and carpeting laid, pews painted and cushions added. The pulpit chairs were covered in memory of Mrs. Mary Shultz. The altar set was given in memory of Wayne Huffman. Mrs. Irene Huffman and Shirley have also given a pulpit scarf set, communion cloths, road side sign for the church, shrubbery, and many other things too numerous to mention in memory of Wayne and Jacob Huffman.

Beulah's third communion set and the one now in use was a gift from Rev. and Mrs. S.C. (Smiley) Williams and Miss Eugenia Doyle in memory of their parents, Floyd and Nettie Stulting Doyle. This silver communion set was used for the first time on World Wide Communion Sunday, the first Sunday in October, 1947.

In 1948 on Easter Sunday, the present pulpit Bible was also presented to the church by Rev. and Mrs. Williams and Miss Doyle in memory of their parents.

The red chairs that are used in the primary room were gotten by Mrs. J.T. Williams. She made little reed basket woven around pickle jars and put flowers in them to be used as decorations when the Auxiliary held an ice-cream supper. At the close of the evening she sold the baskets and used the proceeds to buy the chairs.

The Baptismal bowl was a gift to Beulah from Mrs. Cramer, mother of Mrs. George F. Houck, Jr.

In 1945, the Methodist Church, South sold their half interest in Beulah Church for \$800.00, the Home Missions Committee having agreed to give \$500.00 of the amount. On November 11, 1945 the deed was signed and Beulah Church became entirely Presbyterian.

Time and space will not allow the mention of all the many people who down through the past century have served Beulah Church in so many ways. We would be remiss in reporting this history if we did not mention three who have served as ruling elders for such a long period of time. Mr. F.A. Doyle was installed July 1, 1901 and served until his death on May 28, 1938 covering a period of almost 37 years. Mr. C. C.

Burns was installed September 17, 1916 and served until his death on January 4, 1947, a period of more than thirty years. C. Stanley Dever, who passed away in November of 1997 was installed on September 20, 1925 as an elder, a period of 72 years.

In 1974 we were no longer part of Lexington Presbytery. The Synod of Virginia, at its meeting took action to redraw the boundaries of presbyteries. The new Presbytery 4 was named Shenandoah and consists of 119 churches, and extends from Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania to Lexington, Virginia, and from the Blue Ridge Mountains to Mt. Storm, West Virginia.

On May 2, 1982 our first woman elder, Mary Carolyn Hooke, was installed. In 1988 we changed to a unicameral system. Maxine Shultz and Richard Simmons were elected at that time.

The Sunday School organization is as old as the church organization. It was first held in The Hall. It was well attended and was conducted under the joint auspices of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The school continued here until the church building was erected. Sunday School has been held regularly since that time, even during the periods when the church was without a pastor.

The first women's organization was Ladies Missionary Society which was organized by Rev. Laird in 1873. Mrs. Laird was president and Miss Annie Ervine was secretary-treasurer. There were probably about ten members of young women and girls. An organization of this kind was a new thing to all of them. The money was kept in a little box. Dues were 10 cents per month. Sometimes someone would wonder where her 10 cents was coming from.

The group was re-organized at Baraka Chapel on July 6, 1906 and by unanimous vote was called the Women's Foreign Missionary Society.

In July, 1923 a meeting of the women's Foreign Missionary Society was held at Beulah Church, at which time Mrs. Andrew Jones and Miss Kate Gibson from Monterey explained the Auxiliary plan. By unanimous vote the group was re-organized as the Women's Auxiliary. It continued to function under that name until 1948 when the church's governing body changed the name of the women's groups. It has since been known as the Women of the Church.

In 1977 aluminum siding was installed on the church and fellowship hall. A layer of insulation was put under the siding. Also the old flues were torn down and the hole repaired, new guttering installed, replacement of window panes and painting the windows.

In November, 1985 a flood tore through our community causing much damage. The bridge on Route 84 broke in two pieces and the bridge to the church suffered

damage. Temporary repairs were made by church members. In early 1986 A.R. Coffey & Sons constructed a new bridge for \$7,700. \$5,000 came from Presbytery's disaster fund. The rest came from the Women of the Church, friends, and a collection of \$677.87 on March 30th during worship service.

The sound system in the social hall was installed in memory of Carolyn Hooke Mauzy by Mr. & Mrs. Adolph Hooke and family.

In honor of Mrs. Evelyn Dever, our church pianist for many, many years, stained glass windows were installed around the front doors and a baby grand piano was purchased.

A handicap ramp was constructed into the church social hall in memory of Mrs. Alta C. Brock by her son and daughter-in-law, Joe and Phyllis Brock.

A Session Minute Book was donated by Grace P. King in memory of her husband Martin Ellis King, an elder of the church.

On July 14, 1991 the family of Rebecca Thomas donated a bell to the church in her memory.

Mini blinds were installed in the dining room and Sunday school rooms in memory of Alta Brock.

In July, 1993 the steeple was restored in loving memory and honor of Elbert A. and Jessie M. Pullin and Boyd G. and Viola P. Rexrode by Manfred and Linda Freeman.

In recent years we have installed shutters in the sanctuary, installed replacement windows and floor tile in the educational building, a dishwasher and microwave in the kitchen. Mary Puffenbarger and Sarah Shifflett donated a considerable amount of money toward the purchase of the new organ in the church. The rest of the cost was donated by other individuals.

Unfortunately, in the past twenty-five years we have lost a lot of our members in death. We will always fondly remember how each one made a contribution to our church in his or her own way. Today we have 55 active members and 24 baptized members.

During the past one hundred and twenty-five years Beulah Church has remained the gathering place that the founding members intended it to be. May Beulah Church always be a place where God is at home and we want to go to His house to commune with him.

Acknowledgment is made to the following:

Miss Eugenia Doyle for notes she kept on happenings at Beulah, also records secured from the session book and minutes of the women's meetings. Also, scrap books of the late Mrs. Florence Wade Fleisher and Rev. A.E. Johnson's book on Presbyterianism in Highland County. Each source of information was of invaluable help in writing the above history. Mrs. Frances Pullin and Mrs. Virginia Briscoe for all the hard work that they put into the 100 years history.