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Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church celebrates anniversary— in 165-year history of the church, there have been only nine pastors

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Herald Staff Writer

BETHANY about 1793, a conservative minority of the congregation of Beersheba Presbyterian Church pulled out of the congregation because they felt that they could not conscientiously submit to the innovation of hymn singing in church.

The families, who though it wrong to add anything or subtract anything from the scriptures, objected to a refrain that was added to the singing of one of the psalms, the story goes.

These families organized Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1797, and on June 1 of that year William Dixon, a licentiate of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church became their first minister.

The first meeting place of the church was in Mr. Dixon's house, although tradition has it that Bethany became a preaching place in 1796 and that the first time the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was observed there it was in the woods near the spring west of Kings Mountain road.

The first house of worship built by the congregation of the Bethany church was made of logs, and it stood near where the front gate of the cemetery now is.

During the summer months, when it was too hot to stay cooped up in a log cabin, the services were held in a brush arbor.

The congregation soon built a frame church, which was replaced in 1914 with the present brick building.

Mrs. J. L. McGill, whose great-grandmother was one of the original members of the Bethany A.R.P. Church, remembers her grandmother objecting to assuming so large a debt to build a new church.

Rev. W. P. Grier, then the pastor, remonstrated her with, "I had rather die in debt to man than in debt to God."

So the church was built, and on June 20, 1920, it was dedicated, the debt for it completely paid off.

In 1960 work was completed on an educational building, and the members proudly point out that that is already paid for and dedicated.

In the 165-year history of the church, there have been only nine pastors.

After Dr. Dixon retired in 1830, Rev. Joseph Banks became pas-

tor of the church. He had served only two years, when, due to a controversy on the question of slavery, he returned to the north.

Dr. R. C. Grier followed him in 1841. He resigned in 1848 to accept presidency of Erskine College.

In 1849 Dr. E. E. Boyce became pastor of the church, a position he was to hold for almost 37 years.

Dr. R. M. Stevenson was fifth pastor of the church. He was in-

stalled in May, 1887, and served until 1911.

In 1912 Rev. W. P. Grier, a nephew of Dr. R. C. Grier, took the pulpit. He served until 1945.

From 1946 until 1951 Rev. Murray Griffin was pastor, and Rev. George Lauderdale came in 1952 and stayed until 1957.

The present pastor, Rev. F. W. Sherrill, took the job in 1957.

It was the first Sabbath in July, 1912 that the congregation of the Bethany church first had a home-

coming dinner. That also marked the first day that Rev. W. P. Grier preached in his new church.

Since then the first Sabbath in July has been set aside each year for a homecoming service and dinner.

There are 230 members of the Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church now. Three churches in the Bethany area have grown out of the Bethany church. These are Crowder's

Creek A.R.P. Church, Clover

A.R.P. Church and Oakdale Presbyterian Church.

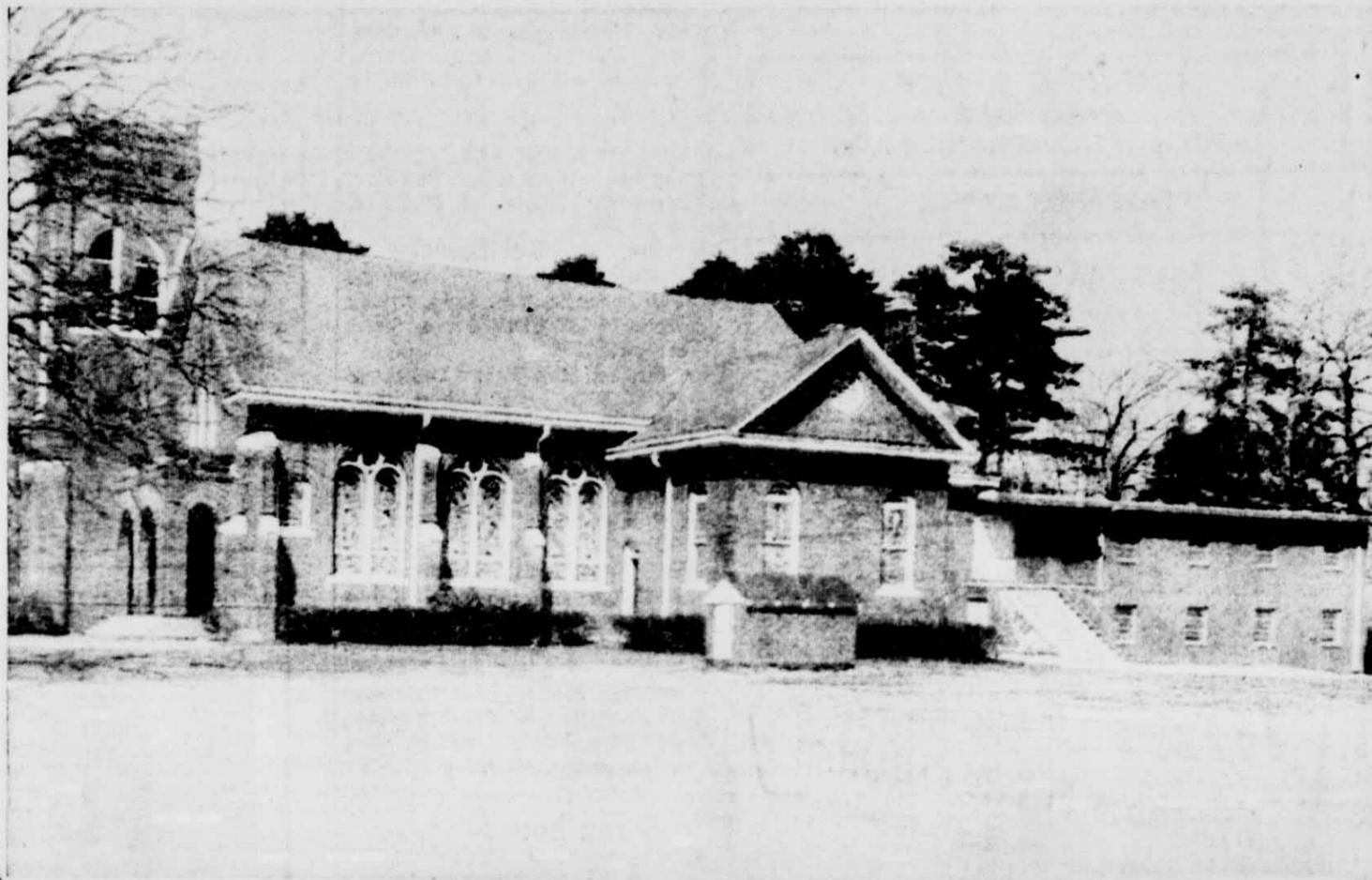
Most of the present members are descendants of the original members, and most of the original families are still represented in the Bethany church.

Members of the session at the Bethany church are Mr. Sherrill, moderator; G. T. Davidson, clerk; J. C. Davidson, Frank Plaxco, W. J. Davis, E. B. Faulkner, Raymond Talbert, Marshall Douglas, John McGill, Charles McGill, George Whitesides, J. F. Faulkner, C. P. Barry, Gettys Wells and Earl Wells.

On the board of deacons are Lee Stewart, Roy Crawford, D. D. McCarter, Wylie Douglas, Grady Howell, W. S. Grayson, Jim Faulkner, Elmer Biggers, Cecil Stewart, Anderson McCarter, Carl Smith, Hugh Faulkner, Robert Barnes, Quay Whitesides, Newell Crawford, W. M. Faulkner, Garland Davidson Jr. and Newton Davis.

Gettys is church treasurer. Mrs. Lee Stewart is pianist and J. Cohen Davidson is choir director.

Other elected officers include C. P. Barry, church school superintendent; Mrs. F. W. Sherrill, president of the Women's Society; Richard Davidson, president of the Young People's Christian Union; Charles Biggers, president of the Intermediate Society.



Bethany Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was established in 1797 in the Bethany community near Clover. In 1914, the brick sanctuary was built, and in 1960 the educational building was added. The Bethany

church celebrated its 165th birthday July 1 with a homecoming service. The service, first held in 1912, is an annual event on the first Sabbath in July.

Herald photo—Lewis