

Historical Timeline

1805 – 2005

Captain Andrew Pickens, son of William and Margaret Pike Pickens, came with his family to Pennsylvania in about 1719, settling in Bucks County. He married Anne Davis around 1728/29 in Pennsylvania.

[General] Andrew Pickens was born September 13, 1739, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, the son of Captain Andrew and Anne Davis Pickens.

About 1739, Captain Andrew Pickens moved his family to Augusta County, Virginia, and finally onto the Waxhaw Settlement in 1751 in Lancaster County, South Carolina. The Waxhaw Presbyterian Church was established a few years later (1754).

It was at the Waxhaw settlement that [Gen.] Andrew Pickens met Rebecca Calhoun. In 1762 the Calhoun families, including [Gen.] Pickens, returned to the Long Canes in Granville County. Soon afterwards they established the Upper Long Cane Presbyterian Church in 1763.

On March 19, 1765, Andrew Pickens married Rebecca Calhoun, daughter of Ezekiel Calhoun and aunt of John C. Calhoun

Gen. Pickens and Gen. Robert Anderson were the leaders in organizing the Hopewell-Keowee Presbyterian Church in 1789 [the Old Stone Church near Clemson University].

In 1799, the Synod of the Carolinas divided the area of South Carolina into two presbyteries with the unromantic names of First and Second.

“From the most authentic information, Bethel Church, [Pendleton] District, South Carolina was organized in the year of our Lord, Anno Domini 1805. The first house of worship was a rough round log house. The first Pastor, Rev. Andrew Brown. The Elders, Gen. Andrew Pickens, Nathan Lusk, Robert White. Subsequently a hewed log house was erected. The families composing the congregation were as follows: viz; on Little River, John McWhorter (school master), Nathan & Henry Lusk, Alexander Keown, John Hughes & Andrew Pickens. Oconee Creek were Thomas Lesley & Francis Jinkens. On Cane Creek Patrick, Andrew, Alexander & John White, James Anderson, Oliver Woods, John McWhorter (black smith), John & Josiah Houston, Jesse Neville & Mrs. Ware, and Conneross Arthur McDow and Abner Steele” (Minutes of Session, April 22, 1855, S.R. McFall, clerk).

The Robert Akers Land, surveyed March 26, 1803, was granted to James Todd on July 1, 1805, and conveyed by said Todd to Alexander White on February 2, 1810.

Apparently before 1810, Alexander Keown removed to the Abbeville District where he was raised, and John Houston removed to Georgia.

Deaths: James Anderson (1813), Henry Lusk (1813), Robert White (1813), Rebecca Calhoun Pickens (1814), and General Andrew Pickens (1817).

1816–1818: A number of the families composing the original congregation immigrated to Greene County, Alabama, with Rev. Brown: Arthur McDow, John Hughes, Abner Steele, Oliver Woods, and an unspecified White family.

Thomas Lesly moved in 1819, going over the mountain to McMinn County, Tennessee.

Elder Nathan Lusk built a log home near Salem in 1820 that is now on the National Register of Historic Places

In 1826 the Pendleton District was divided into the Anderson District and the Pickens District

Bethel was on the list of vacant pastorates in 1825, 1826 and 1828

Alexander and Agnes White's daughter, Catherine DeWitt White, married John Sharp Jr. in 1827 at Bethel Church. The young couple settled near her father's home

Josiah Houston, another founding family, had removed to Fayette County, Georgia, by 1830.

In the early 1830s the founding families of John McWhorter (*school-master*) and Francis Jinkins departed to establish Richland Presbyterian Church in 1834, serving as Richland's first two ruling elders.

The church was again listed as having a vacant pastorate in 1836 and through the end of that decade

Rev. William McWhorter, son of John and Elizabeth Wilson McWhorter (*blacksmith*), preached his first sermon at Bethel Church in 1837. He was the first Presbyterian minister born and raised in the Old Pickens District.

John McWhorter (*blacksmith*), ruling elder and clerk of the session, moved to Walker County, Georgia, following his wife's death in 1840

Alexander White deeded about six acres of property from his farm to Bethel Church on October 27, 1845. The purpose was to build a new timber-framed house of worship, which was built in 1846 by contractor Henry Steele

On March 9, 1851, the Richland Session met, and Rev. Wm. McWhorter acted as the moderator. Thirteen persons were dismissed to be organized into Retreat Presbyterian Church

In 1852 Samuel and Anna Warnock McFall purchased the property near this church known as Oconee Station from John Doyle, and removed thereto from their former residence at Pickens Courthouse. Sometime after their arrival Samuel McFall was elected a ruling elder and clerk.

Alexander White sold David and Nancy Trotter Duncan 746 acres lying on Oconee Creek just prior to his death in 1852. David and Nancy joined Bethel Church three years later.

The number of communicants was about 18 or 19 in 1853; the ruling elders were John Todd and Joseph Burnett

The church's Minute Book and Register were both started again on April 22, 1855. The new King James Bible, published in 1854, was inscribed by McFall with the same date

South Carolina officially left the Union on December 20, 1860, when the convention ratified an article of secession.

The organization of “The Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States” took place in Augusta, Georgia, in December 1861.

Though he was beyond the age limit, Samuel McFall enlisted in the Confederate Army. He was killed at the Battle of Gaines Mill near Richmond, Virginia, on June 27, 1862. Samuel Newton Whitner McFall fell upon the same battlefield with his father and died a few days later

James Jasper Kelley, husband of Catherine Lovely Sharp and father of five, died on January 12, 1864, at Charleston; he was thirty-seven years of age. Catherine died a year later. Their children were raised by their grandparents, John and Catherine White Sharp

David and Nancy Trotter Duncan lost three sons and a son-in-law to the War (Madison, Benjamin, Josiah, and William Carlyle Todd their son-in-law). Their oldest son, Mason, was the only one to return.

In 1866 John Sharp Jr. and James George were elected elders, and John N. George, John N. Todd, and Joseph W. Holleman were elected deacons.

The formation of the Walhalla Presbyterian Church in 1868 led to many good elders and their families moving their letters to the church in town, including Anna McFall and the remaining girls (1868), Elder James and Mary George (1868), Elder Dr. L.B. and Mary Johnson (1869), Elder A.D. and Sara Gaillard (1874), and Elder J.A. Bell and his wife, Martha (1882).

On October 26, 1875, the Richland Church dismissed six persons by letter for the formation of Seneca Presbyterian Church.

On June 25, 1882, the Richland Church dismissed thirteen persons to enter into the organization of the Westminster Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Wm. McWhorter died at his residence near Bachelors Retreat Church on February 9, 1884, after a lingering of nine weeks duration

Elder John and Catherine White were each 79 years old, were one month’s difference in age, were married 58 years, had 14 children, and died two hours apart the night of March 12, 1884.

In March 1894, Thomas McBride Kelley, *son of James Jasper and Catherine Sharp Kelley*, and Madison Carlyle Todd, *son of Wm Carlyle and Jane Duncan Todd*, were ordained ruling elders. Also ordained as Deacons were Sobieski Todd Cowan, *son of Robert Hiram and Mary Todd Cowan*, James Edwin Kelley, *son of James Jasper and Catherine Sharp Kelley*, and Joseph David Cowan, *son of S.F.K. and Dorcas Duncan Cowan*.

Rev R.L. Rogers, January 1898 — April 1905

Centennial Celebration held August 9 and 10, Wednesday and Thursday

Only one or two sermons during 1907 (minutes April 1909)

Rev. George M. Wilcox, April 1909 – December 1915

Hannah Satterfield, the daughter of John Benson Satterfield and Mary Lou Emma Cowan, was only ten years old when she joined Bethel Church on July 30, 1917.

Rev. W.H. Hamilton, April 9, 1916 – December 9, 1923

Rev. Frank B. Estes, November 9, 1924 – March 8, 1931

Rev. E.T. Wilson, Nov 8, 1931 – December 22, 1935

Rev. J.B. Sloan, January 12, 1936 – April 14, 1941

John Hall elected clerk of session, April 25, 1943 ... served ten years

Rev. Frank R. Morse, December 14, 1941 – June 18, 1944

Rev. H.B. Corbett, May 13, 1945 – October 16, 1947

Rev. Ace L. Tubbs, April 25, 1948 – June 22, 1952

On June 4, 1950, thirty-five members were placed on the retired roll

First meeting to review plans for the Sunday school addition, April 11, 1952

Rev. Trent Howell Jr., June 1, 1952 – December 14, 1952; held Bethel's first-ever Vacation Bible School; provided hand-drawn plans for the Sunday school addition

Plans for the Sunday school addition presented and approved, July 31, 1952; Program approved on August 21, 1952; groundbreaking to be held August 24, 1952; built by Sam Cowan

Rev. A.L. Vreeland, 1953

Session named a manse committee, April 5, 1953; built that same year by Sam Cowan

Rev. W.S. Blanton Jr., 1954 – Sept 22, 1957

John Jay Cowan elected clerk of session on July 10, 1955 ... served eighteen years

Bethel's 150th Celebration, August 10, 1955 (exactly fifty years from the centennial) and August 14, 1955; Pulpit furniture given by the Sharp Reunion in memory of John and Catherine Sharp

Rev. John Bradshaw, Oct 20, 1957 – Feb 1, 1959

Rev. Mac Faust, February 1, 1959 – summer

Rev. R.M. Lytton, summer 1959

Rev. John B. Degges, June–September 1960

Rev. Mac Faust, February 1, 1960–61

Franklin B. Clarke Jr., March–September 1961

James M. Readling, 1962 summer

Blue stained glass windows installed in the sanctuary in 1962

John Whitner, 1963 summer

Erskine Clarke, June–September 1964

Rev. Ronald McElrath: March 14, 1965 – April 6, 1968

Cross placed in the sanctuary in January 1966

Oconee County celebrated its one hundredth anniversary, 1868 – 1968

Rev. Charles Renall, summer 1969

Rudolph H. Chasteen, June 7, 1970 – Nov 9, 1975

Church underpinning approved October 12, 1972; work by Elmer Cox and Frank Crowe

Pews purchased from Bountyland Baptist Church, May 23, 1973

Bethel was the only church in Oconee County with a full-time minister in 1973

Communion Table and Chairs given in memory of Loula Rankin Beaty, August 5, 1973

Motion passed on October 7, 1973, to set the fourth Sunday of September as the annual Homecoming celebration

Ruling Elder and Clerk of Session, John Jay Cowan, died November 25, 1973

Ruling Elder T.M. Galloway died on April 8, 1974

Offering Plates given May 20, 1975, in memory of Samuel Vardry and Jane Duncan Todd Massey

John Hall and Ed Cowan given the status of elder emeritus, September 12, 1976

Rev. Jack Stevenson, December 5, 1976 – December 31, 1983

On June 24, 1979, Catherine O'Neal Rankin became the first female ruling elder to be ordained in Bethel Church and the only female elder in Oconee County

Sponsorship Resolution of Vietnamese family to come to Oconee County, August 12, 1979

Church Siding Proposal: June 26, 1980, July 15, 1980, August 3, 1980, and August 10, 1980

Bethel's 175th Celebration, Sunday, September 28, 1980

Discussions of joint-pastorate with Richland PC: July 12, 1981, August 12, 1981, August 23, 1981

On October 1, 1981, a dinner was held at Bethel Church to discuss the creation of a countywide aid-to-the-needy program ... what would eventually become the Oconee Presbyterian Service Fund

After joining the Presbyterian Church USA in 1983, the church voted to retain exclusive property rights on June 10, 1984

Rev. Charles Ernest Reichenbach, September 1, 1984 — Dec 31, 1994; served as joint-minister for Bethel and Richland

First detailed budget: November 1984 for 1985

Walter & Lucille Moore gave a \$1000 gift in memory of Stan Moore for start of the building fund (February 7, 1985)

New building plan: Feb 25, 1985; Aug 27, 1985; and Oct 1, 1985 (Minutes of Session);

Christmas Eve service began December 1985 (Margaret Nixon)

Plan recommended by the Session to renovate the church failed on November 24, 1985

Approval to install drop ceiling on December 3, 1985

Received twenty shares of Southern Bank Stocks from Dusenberry January 20, 1986

Vote on the use of vinyl siding on the church: June 8, 1986; July 13, 1986 (passed 28-10)

Piedmont Presbytery renamed 'Foothills' on October 25, 1987

David Landrum Hanvey died on December 17, 1990. He was first ordained a deacon in 1951 and then a ruling elder in 1959. D.L. served as the Church Treasurer for forty years.

New Fellowship Building discussed January 20, 1991; approved April 7, 1991; and dedicated on July 18, 1992

The Baptismal Font was given on February 14, 1993, by Isabelle Macaulay Dusenberry in memory of her parents, Neill Webster and Henrietta Holleman Macaulay.

Handicapped Ramp, August 1993

Church Roofed in March 94

End of Yoke-pastorate with Richland, June 29, 1994

George Hart, May 21, 1995 — May 12, 1996

Rev Kendall Todd Bryant, May 19, 1996 — Dec 6, 1998

Millicent Massey, wife of the late J.D. Massey, donated \$10,000 at Homecoming on September 27, 1998

George Hart, April 19, 1999 — Sept 5, 2000

Rev Frank Strickland, September 12, 2000—present; ordained October 22, 2000

Millicent Massey gave \$100,000 to the church on Sunday, April 8, 2001

Congregational Meeting to approve interior renovation, February 12, 2002

Ribbon cutting for the renovation on April 28, 2002

Honorary plaques to Joe McAlister, Hoyt Lee, Paul Chalmers and Winfield Sharp on July 14, 2002

Louise Bell presents picture of the Lord's Supper, August 6, 2002

Jim Boyle's watercolor painting of the church presented, September 2002

Heritage Plaque installed in the sanctuary, November 2002

Robert E. Moore donated his hand-carved Nativity Scene to the church, December 2002

Worship time changed to 10:30 on January 5, 2003

Pulpit Bible placed in memory of C.J. Sanders on July 13, 2003

Bicentennial committee elected on August 17, 2003

January 2004, the Bicentennial Committee recommended to the Session that the church purchase a bronze bell from McShane Bell Foundry to sit atop a stone monument. A bronze plaque with the names of the pastors, elders, and deacons from 1905 – 2005 would be mounted on the front side of the monument.

Bicentennial Celebration 2005, September 24 and 25, Saturday and Sunday

Hanna Satterfield Lee Arve died on May 16, 2006, having been a member of Bethel Church for eighty-eight years.