

Churches in the Shenandoah Valley

Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church
2395 Readus Rd
Edinburg, VA 22824



A brief History

Today's traveler will come upon a beautiful country church approximately three miles west of Woodstock, Virginia on Route 42. Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, built in 1880, is situated in a location within view of both farmland and distant mountains. Although the church building has undergone a variety of structural changes throughout its 127-year history, its original religious purpose continues to be successful and influential on the members of its present congregation. The following story is a brief

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account of Wesley Chapel's creation and the continuing importance it plays in the lives of the local families.

Throughout the nineteenth century, it was not unusual for one-room schoolhouses to become centers for local social, political, and religious meetings, as well as educational purposes. Families near the eventual location of Wesley Chapel were fortunate because they had available to them three such schoolhouses Green Hill, Calvary, and Elizabeth Schools. (Green Hill School sat near the present intersection of Barbershop Road and Readus Road; Calvary School sat at the present intersection of Rt. 42. and St. Luke Rd.).

It is assumed that, after several years of religious gatherings by local families during the 1870's a decision was made to build a church. The twenty dollar purchase of a one-half acre site from Henry and Caroline Sheetz by five church Trustees occurred in February, 1880. The second parcel one acre, deeded in the same month - was purchased from Joseph and Sarah Barton for twenty-five dollars.

Following are excerpts from the two deeds recorded in Shenandoah County Courthouse, designating land for the new church:

This Deed, made the 23 day of February, 1880, between Henry Sheetz and Caroline, his wife, of the County of Shenandoah and State of Virginia, of the one part and W.H. Sheetz, Elias L Irvin, John Dirting, Daniel H. Hottel, and Perry Irvin, Trustees, as herein after mentioned and their successors, forever, of the same County and State of the second part.

Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Twenty Dollars in hand, paid...and do hereby grant unto the said parties of the second part a certain parcel, piece or tract of land, containing one half acre...about 3 miles southwest from Woodstock and situated in...the forks of the Columbia Furnace and Fadeley roads...

Said Trustees are also authorized...at any time in the future to erect a parsonage or a sexton's house or both..and to be so constructed as not to interfere with the free..enjoyment of said property for religious purposes in accordance with the Discipline of said Church..And the said grantors hereby warrant generally the property..that the same is free from all emcumbrance...and that the said grantors and their successors forever shall have quiet and undisturbed possession of the premises.

Witness, the following signature and seals.

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Henry Sheetz Seal

Caroline Sheetz Seal

This Deed, made the 24 day of February, 1880 between Jos.M Barton, Sarah C. his wife, and [same trustees]

Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of Twenty five Dollars...grant unto the said parties of the second part...a tract pf land containing one acre...and adjoining the tract conveyed by William Sheetz

Joseph M. Barton Seal

Sarah C. Barton Seal

Church construction began immediately. The initial congregation members were quite excited at the laying of the corner stone in early June, 1880. By September, the complete interior of the wooden building was being plastered! Because of such enthusiasm and hard work from many members of the local families, the "Methodist Episcopal Church South" later named Wesley Chapel - opened its doors in the fall of 1880!

The first Pastor for Wesley Chapel, Rev. W.C. Maloy, came from the Methodist Church of Woodstock. The Woodstock church provided Wesley Chapel's services with pastors from 1880 to 1889. In 1889, Wesley Chapel became connected to what is now Edinburg's St. Johns United Methodist Church (charge) and has remained so ever since. Rev. O.C. Beal was the first Pastor from Edinburg serving Wesley Chapel's congregation.

Many families have remained important in the history of Wesley Chapel. It seems true that, once becoming a part of the congregation, family members remain within the church for generations.

The following quote has come from Mrs, Iva Kibler Wakeman, a well-respected member of Wesley Chapel's congregation:

"I remember Wesley Chapel with white weatherboard and clear windows; inside were two wood stoves, four kerosene lamps hanging from the ceiling, two isles (for two doors), brown carpeting; when we prayed, about 25% of the people got down on their knees."

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Dates and Events

February 23, 1880 Deed signed, designating approximately 1/2 acre of land.

The deed was between Henry Sheetz and his wife, Caroline Sheetz and the first Trustees of the church (W.H. Sheetz, Elias L. Irvin, John Dirting, Dave H. Hottel, and Perry Irvin).

February 24, 1880 Deed signed, designating additional one acre. This deed was between Joseph M. Barton and his wife Sarah and the Trustees.

May 28, 1880

Local newspaper article stated: "The laying of the corner stone of the new Methodist church near Green Hill will take place next Saturday. The Woodstock Band will be present. A dinner for the benefit of the church under the management of the ladies will be served. Price of dinner 25 cents.

September 1, 1880

Advertisement in local newspaper: "To Plasterers. Bids will be received for plastering the new Methodist church near Green Hill. Materials will be furnished by the church William Sheets, Perry Sibert, Elias Irvin."

Early services were conducted by traveling Methodist ministers until a minister from the Woodstock congregation was assigned. About this same time scheduled Sunday school classes were started.

1915 Church remodeled, belfry added, one door removed, leaving one.

Mid 1920's New ceiling put in sanctuary

1925 Sanctuary received new ceiling

1927 Church received new roof

1930 Congregation numbered about 120 members with a Sunday School enrollment of 60-70. Worship services were conducted on the first & third Sunday of each month.

Mid 1930's Electricity installed

Early 1950's Worship services increased to every Sunday.

1953 North wing added to church and bathrooms added

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1955	Rt. 42 re-routed and took 40% of church property
1968	Evangelical United Brethrens and Methodists merged to become the United Methodist Church Church sanctuary remodeled
1974	Outside brick bulletin board added
1975	West wing added
1988	Carillon and organ installed; two exterior doors added
1998	New front door added to church
2000	Air conditioning added
2006	New, large, lighted sign added

Though the building has changed, members have come and gone, customs and services have changed, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church has remained a very important part of its parishioners' lives.

Submitted by the Edinburg United Methodist Parish, August 2012