

Rural Valley Methodist Episcopal Church One Of Oldest In Area; Services In 1851

The 104 year history of the Rural Valley Methodist Episcopal Church makes it one of the oldest churches in that area.

Methodist activity in the area was started in 1851 when a Methodist Society was organized in Rural Valley as a part of the Dayton Circuit which included Smicksburg, Dayton Milton and Rural Valley.

Prayer meetings and preaching services were held at the home of John Stoops for about a year before a church was constructed. The Stoops residence was located on the present site of the former Hotel Broad—now Hotel Apartments.

First church was erected on the site of the present church in 1852 on a tract of land donated by Squire Knight who resided in the adjoining property, known as the R. M. Trolinger house.

Extreme difficulties were encountered in the construction of the first church when a driving wind storm struck the building as the roof was about to be completed and caused sufficient damage to require reconstruction of almost the entire structure.

Neither the Dayton or Rural Valley Churches have complete records of the pastors of the Methodist Church while Rural Valley was still a part of the Dayton circuit.

These partial records include the following ministers: J. N. Pierce, S. Burt, H. Long, J. B. Gray, P. G. Edmonds and J. McCarty. Records also indicate that Edmonds held a seven-weeks revival in 1868 after which eighty-six new members joined the church on probation.

In 1875 the trustees; E. Z. Schrecengost, John Stoops, P. T. Ammond, James S. Peters and George A. Gourley made application for a reorganization of circuits.

Subsequently the Rural Valley Church was removed from the Dayton circuit and designated the center of the Rural Valley circuit which also included Echo, Simpson and Pine Furnace. Whitesburg, now part of the circuit, was on the Elderton circuit.

First pastor of the Rural Valley circuit was Rev. A. J. Ashe who arrived in Rural Valley in 1878 and faced the reorganization and revitalization of a church which at that time had only twenty members with no regular Sunday School and a church building in dire need of repairs.

Rev. Ashe, who lived across from the church in the Stockdale house, conducted a revival service and added seventy-five new members.

During the pastorate of Rev. Charles McCaslin, in about 1890, Whitesburg was added to the circuit.

In the fall of 1892 the corner stone of the present church building was laid. The Rural Valley Presbyterian congregation had started building a church at the same year.

Methodist and Presbyterian services were held on alternate Sundays in the old Presbyterian



View of Rural Valley Methodist Episcopal Church Gazette Photo by Sipos

Church on the hill near the cemetery during the erection of the new church buildings.

Construction of the Methodist Church was done by W. S. Elgin and I. H. Foster according to terms of a contract dated August 20, 1892. The building, the same church now in use was dedicated in 1893 during the pastorate of Rev. D. J. Frum.

The old structure had been moved back to the alley and was later sold and subsequently used as a public and later as Rural Valley's first printing office.

Cost of the new structure is recorded as \$3,700 which was many years being paid off. The church included an auditorium and a lecture room.

A parsonage was erected during the pastorate of Rev. S. G. Noble which began in 1900 and ended in 1903. This building is now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lauster. It was sold when the congregation decided to build a new parsonage on the lot adjoining the church on the West side.

First occupants of the present parsonage were Rev. Joel Hunt and his family in 1904.

The addition of the rear of the church was approved by the official board in March, 1919 to be erected and used as the home of the primary department of the Sunday School and as a social room but this first addition included a small kitchen in the corner of the social room but this proved inadequate and in November, 1926, men of the congregation built a kitchen in the rear.

An electric organ and church chimes were installed in the

church in 1942 and the parsonage kitchen was modernized in 1952 while a cement-block garage was added in 1953.

A list of pastors for the Rural Valley circuit is as follows:

A. J. Ashe, 1878; W. S. Cummings, 1879; S. B. Laverty, 1881; T. W. Robbins, 1884; C. C. Emerson, 1886; Charles McCaslin, 1889; D. J. Frum, 1892; G. A. Sheets, 1896; S. G. Noble, 1900; Joel Hunt, 1903; William Hamilton, 1911; William H. Nevius, 1914.

F. R. Peters, 1918; Charles M. Sherburne, 1921; L. Z. Robinson, 1926; C. L. Moore, 1934; M. B. Clendenien, 1939; D. W. Davis, 1941; R. W. Huntsman, 1942; P. W. Large, 1944; A. W. Smith, 1950 and A. J. Musselman, 1953 and present pastor.

Pastors who have gone out from the Rural Valley Methodist Church are J. T. Steffey, John Cogley and Ralph Robinson.

Present active membership is about one hundred and sixty, according to Rev. Musselman.

SERMON

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE
Harry Burton Boyd, Pastor
Presbyterian Church, Indiana

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh"—Luke 6-45.

These words were spoken by Jesus as he was preaching to a great crowd just after he had chosen his disciples. They had spent the night in prayer on a mountain overlooking the sea of Galilee. The discourse recorded in Luke was piercing, tearing away the shroud of a dead ritual, and the pretense of keeping feasts and fasts. Here He reaches a climax as he describes the output of the fountain of life as the Jews knew it.

"Out of the treasure of his heart". In the Bible individual organs of the body are identified with the special functions of the mind. The heart is the organ of thought, but not exclusively of reasoning power, for it is the seat of the affections and appetites, joy—anger—hatred, in fact the whole personal life including all moral impulses. It is synonymous with conscience. One man draws good treasure and the other evil treasure from the heart.

Look first at the evil man and his offering to society. He draws forth evil thoughts and passions. His whole moral nature is perverted. All that he said and did was destructive of right and decency. Our society has such citizens. The Kefauver Committee developed that fact. Gov. Dewey uncovered it in New York. Many