



WEARS VALLEY METHODIST CHURCH C. 1911

First Row: John McClure, William Conner, Jim Hatcher, Aaron Waycaster and daughter Maude, Mrs. Aaron Waycaster, Aaron Crowson, Mack Hatcher, John Cotter, Edgar Clabo, West Crowson, Mitchel Emert, John W. Lawson

Second Row: Wesley Clabo, Mary McKelder, Myrtle Tarwater, Josie Clabo, Clarence Tarwater, Mary Hatcher, Luther Waycaster, George Waycaster, Boyd McClure, Frank Clabo, Bob Waycaster, Will McGill, Joe Crowson and daughter Kate

Third Row: Ida Conner, Marcus Reagan, Lizzie Emert, Lona Conner, George Cameron, Mrs. John Lawson, Josie Murphy, Mae Murphy, Ann Murphy, Dolly Clabo, Robert Trotter, Mrs. Robert Trotter, Mrs. Jake Headrick, Jake Headrick, Carrie Crowson, Hettie Emert

Fourth Row: A.B. Shields, Mrs. John Cotter, Harriet Daily, Cora Bull, Bertha Lawson, Ida Emert, Ada Conner, Bonnie Bull, Pearl Crowson, Bessie Conner, *Lizzie* Waycaster, Bates McClure, Elder McClure, Ethel Tarwater, Viola Clabo, Matt Duggan

Front Row: Loy Crowson, Ray Emert, Bill Waycaster, West Murphy, Reed Bull, West Waycaster

WEARS VALLEY METHODIST CHURCH

A HISTORY, 1792-2007

EACH DAY THE CHIMES OF THE WEARS VALLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CAN BE HEARD THROUGHOUT THE VALLEY. AS THEY RING OUT SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL, BELOVED HYMNS OF THE CHURCH, PEOPLE FROM ONE END OF WEARS VALLEY TO THE OTHER PAUSE FOR A FEW SECONDS OF PRAISE AND THANKS TO THE GOD OF ALL PEOPLE. FOR SOME FOLKS, THE CHIMES REMIND THEM OF THE RICH HISTORY OF THE VALLEY, AND OF THE CHURCH.

ORIGINALLY CALLED THE "WEAR PLANTATION," WEARS VALLEY WAS DEEDED TO COL. SAMUEL WEAR BY JOHN SEVIER IN PAYMENT FOR WEAR'S SERVICE IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. THE FIRST WHITE PEOPLE TO SETTLE THE VALLEY, HOWEVER, PROBABLY EITHER PURCHASED THEIR LAND FROM WEAR OR, LIKE WEAR, RECEIVED IT FOR THEIR SERVICE TO THEIR COUNTRY. IN 1792 AARON CROWSON, HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW WILLIAM HATCHER, AND PETER PERCIFIELD ARRIVED IN THE VALLEY. CHEROKEE INDIANS IMMEDIATELY ATTACKED THE THREE, PERCIFIELD WAS KILLED, AND CROWSON AND HATCHER CHASED AWAY. THE TWO RETURNED WITH REINFORCEMENTS AND IN TURN DROVE THE NATIVE AMERICANS AWAY, AFTER WHICH THEY SETTLED IN THE VALLEY. PERCIFIELD'S REMAINS WERE BURIED IN WHAT IS NOW THE CROWSON'S CEMETERY, OFF OF THE VALLEY VIEW ROAD. THE AREA THEN, AND FOR SOME TIME THEREAFTER, WAS KNOWN AS CROWSON'S COVE.

CLEARING THE LAND, CONSTRUCTING HOMES AND OUTBUILDINGS, AND PLANTING THEIR CROPS WERE THE FIRST PRIORITIES OF THE EARLY SETTLERS. WORSHIP SERVICES WERE CONDUCTED IN PEOPLE'S HOMES, THEN IN A CAMPGROUND NEAR WHAT IS NOW TOWNSEND. NOT LONG AFTERWARDS, HOWEVER, BOTH METHODISTS AND BAPTISTS MAY HAVE BUILT SMALL CHURCHES FROM LOGS. THE METHODIST CHURCH, NAMED BETHLEHEM CHURCH, HAD NO FLOOR, HAD PUNCHEON SEATS, AND HAD A PLACE IN THE CENTER OF THE CRUDE BUILDING FOR A FIRE - WITH NO FLUE OR ANY OTHER WAY FOR THE SMOKE TO ESCAPE. UNDERSTANDABLY, SERVICES PROBABLY WERE OF SHORT DURATION OR, WHEN THE WEATHER WAS GOOD, HELD OUTSIDE.

THE INITIATIVE FOR UNDERTAKING THE BUILDING OF THAT FIRST CHURCH MAY HAVE COME FROM A VISIT TO THE AREA BY THE REV. FRANCIS ASBURY (1745-1816), THE FIRST BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN AMERICA. ASBURY FIRST CAME TO EAST TENNESSEE IN 1788 AND OVER THE YEARS MADE SIXTEEN MORE VISITS, ACCORDING TO TRADITION AND ASBURY'S DIARY, HE PREACHED IN THE WALDEN'S CREEK AREA, AND METHODISTS FROM CROWSON'S COVE ALMOST SURELY WENT TO SEE HIM.

THAT FIRST METHODIST CHURCH WAS LOCATED ON THE CREEK, ROUGHLY ONE HUNDRED YARDS WEST OF THE PRESENT STRUCTURE. FOR THEIR PART, THE BAPTISTS BUILT THEIR CHURCH ABOUT A QUARTER OF A MILE FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH, NOT FAR FROM THE SITE OF THE PRESENT WEARS VALLEY FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SINCE THE METHODISTS WERE PASTORED BY A CIRCUIT RIDER WHO CAME ONLY ONE SUNDAY EACH MONTH, THEY OFTEN WORSHIPPED TOGETHER WITH THEIR BAPTIST BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND THE TWO GROUPS OFTEN UNITED FOR REVIVALS, CALLED "UNION MEETINGS."

SOMETIME IN THE MID-ISOQS CROWSON'S COVE BECAME WEAR'S COVE. ALSO, IN 1 S44 THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SPLIT, IN PART OVER THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY. AT THE 1 B44 GENERAL CONFERENCE, A RESOLUTION URGING THE REV. JAMES OSGOOD ANDREW, WHO HAD RECENTLY BEEN APPOINTED TO THE POSITION OF BISHOP OF GEORGIA, NOT TO ACCEPT THAT POST UNTIL HE HAD EMANCIPATED HIS SLAVES PASSED BY A VOTE OF 110-69. THE SOUTHERN DELEGATES IMMEDIATELY WITHDREW FROM THE MEETING AND IN 1 B46 ESTABLISHED THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH. THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CHURCHES WERE NOT REUNITED UNTIL 1939.

TECHNICALLY THERE WERE NO "NORTHERN" CHURCHES IN THE HOLSTON CONFERENCE BETWEEN 1 B46 AND 1 S65. THE BETHLEHEM METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO HAVE STEERED A MORE INDEPENDENT COURSE. IT IS A TRADITION IN THE CHURCH THAT IT LEANED TOWARD THE "NORTHERN" CHURCH, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THAT CLAIM. SOME METHODISTS IN THE COVE WERE SLAVEHOLDERS BUT, LIKE MOST EAST TENNESSEANS, THEY COULD BE AGAINST SEPARATION FROM THEIR NORTHERN BRETHREN AND AT THE SAME TIME SUPPORTERS OF **SLAVERY.**

BY 1 BSD WEAR'S COVE CONTAINED SIXTY HOUSEHOLDS. IN THAT SAME YEAR, OR PERHAPS EARLIER, METHODISTS CONSTRUCTED A NEW CHURCH BUILDING TO REPLACE THE SMALL AND COMPARATIVELY UNCOMFORTABLE ONE. RICHARD CROWSON AND RUBEN HATCHER HEADED UP THE EFFORT. THE BUILDING WAS USED BY BOTH THE METHODISTS AND BAPTISTS UNTIL THE LATTER GROUP BUILT THEIR OWN CHURCH SOMEWHAT LATER.

IN THE CIVIL WAR, WEAR'S COVE WAS STRONGLY UNIONIST IN SENTIMENT, SEVENTY-FOUR MEN VOLUNTEERED FOR THE UNION ARMY, WHEREAS ONLY ONE PERSON (BENNETT KING) VOLUNTEERED FOR THE CONFEDERACY - KING HAD THREE BROTHERS WHO JOINED THE UNION ARMY. ALSO, WHEN WELL-KNOWN UNIONIST WILLIAM B, "PARSON" BROWNLOW, A METHODIST MINISTER AND NEWSPAPER EDITOR, HAD TO FLEE FROM KNOXVILLE WHEN CONFEDERATES WERE SEEKING TO CAPTURE AND IMPRISON HIM, HE CAME TO WEAR'S COVE, WHERE HE WAS HIDDEN FOR ABOUT A YEAR BY VALENTINE MATTOX. REBEL SOLDIERS SEARCHED FOR HIM, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS. WHEN

BROWNLOW AT LAST RETURNED TO KNOXVILLE, HE RESUMED PUBLICATION OF HIS PAPER, WHICH HE RENAMED *THE KNOXVILLE WHIG AND REBEL VENTILATOR*. IN THE POSTWAR YEARS, BROWNLOW SERVED AS TENNESSEE'S GOVERNOR AND U. S. SENATOR.

UNTIL 1 B63, WHEN NORTHERN TROOPS DROVE THE CONFEDERATES OUT OF EAST TENNESSEE, THE REBELS MADE SEVERAL RAIDS INTO WEAR'S COVE IN SEARCH OF PROVISIONS, MEN TO FORCIBLY ENLIST INTO THE CONFEDERATE ARMY, AND NOTORIOUS UNIONISTS SUCH AS BROWNLOW. ONE ESPECIALLY PROMINENT WEAR'S COVE UNIONIST WAS THE REV. JAMES DUNN "J.D." LAWSON (1826-1906), A METHODIST CLERGYMAN. LAWSON HAD BEEN BORN IN TUCKALEECHIE COVE IN BLOUNT COUNTY, HAD MOVED TO WEAR'S COVE IN 1 S56, AND WAS ORDAINED BY THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH IN 1 BBS. IN ADDITION TO HIS MINISTRY, LAWSON WORKED AS A FARMER AND FARRIER AND BLACKSMITH WHEN HE WAS NOT "EXHORTING." IN 1 B63 HE SAW HIS SON JOHN LEAVE HOME TO JOIN THE UNION ARMY. DURING THE WAR, LAWSON SERVED AS A GUIDE FOR FEDERAL TROOPS WHO MARCHED THROUGH WEAR'S COVE TO ATTACK QATLINBURG. ALTHOUGH NEVER TECHNICALLY A MEMBER OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, LAWSON'S SERVICE AS A FIELD GUIDE EARNED HIM MEMBERSHIP IN THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, THE UNION ARMY'S VETERANS' ORGANIZATION.

AFTER THE WAR, THE "NORTHERN" CHURCH REAPPEARED IN THE FORMER CONFEDERACY AND SOME METHODIST CHURCHES BEGAN TO CHANGE THEIR AFFILIATIONS FROM THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH TO THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF AMERICA. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE BETHLEHEM CHURCH REAFFILIATED IN 1 B67, WHICH PROBABLY WAS ITS EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT LAWSON HAD BEEN A PASTOR OF THE "SOUTHERN" CHURCH, HE HAD TO BE RECEIVED "ON TRIAL" BY THE "NORTHERN" CHURCH IN 1 B6B AND THE NEXT YEAR WAS FORMALLY ORDAINED A LOCAL ELDER BY BISHOP MATTHEW SIMPSON. BUT HE ALREADY HAD BEEN PREACHING FOR SOME YEARS AND IN 1 B67 WAS LISTED AS THE MINISTER FOR THE CIRCUIT WHICH INCLUDED THE BETHLEHEM CHURCH. OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS LAWSON PASTORED CIRCUITS IN LITTLE RIVER, SEVIERVILLE, NEW MARKET, MARYVILLE, AND FAIR GARDEN, ALL THE WHILE CONTINUING TO LIVE IN WEAR'S COVE. HE RETIRED FROM THE REGULAR CIRCUIT IN 1 BB4. HE **WAS PASTOR OF THE BETHLEHEM CHURCH THROUGH MUCH OF THE PERIOD FROM 1 B67 TO 1 B76 AND PREACHED GUEST SERMONS THROUGHOUT THE AREA IN METHODIST AND BAPTIST CHURCHES ALIKE.**

SOMETIME IN THE 1 BBQs (OR PERHAPS EARLIER), THE OLD BAPTIST CHURCH BLEW DOWN IN A WINDSTORM. AS A RESULT, BETHLEHEM METHODISTS INVITED THEIR BAPTIST NEIGHBORS TO CONDUCT SERVICES IN THEIR BUILDING WHILE THEY WERE UNDERTAKING THE REBUILDING OF THEIR OWN CHURCH,

ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1888, THE METHODISTS HELD A REVIVAL AT WHICH OVER THIRTY PEOPLE EXPERIENCED CONVERSIONS AND TWENTY SOULS WERE ADMITTED TO MEMBERSHIP. BECAUSE OF THAT (3QOD NEWS, THE OLD BUILDING SIMPLY WAS INADEQUATE. AND SO ON NEW YEAR'S DAY 1889 THE MEMBERSHIP VOTED TO BUILD A NEW CHURCH. AT THAT MEETING, AARON CROWSON, SR., J.R. YETT, AND JAKE TARWATER AUTHORIZED THE REV. LAWSON TO PLAN FOR A NEW BUILDING AND BEGIN A SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE TO RAISE THE NECESSARY FUNDS. IMMEDIATELY THIRTY-FIVE PEOPLE GAVE OR PLEDGED MONEY. OF THAT 35, 9 WERE LAWSONS, 5 WERE CROWSONS, 5 WERE HEADRICKS, 3 WERE EMERTS, 2 WERE COTTERS, AND ONE EACH WERE MATTOX, YETT, CAMERON, BENSON, BRYAN, KING, HARDEN, CAYLOR, TARWATER, HATCHER, AND CARVER.

AS NOTED EARLIER, AT THE SAME TIME THE BAPTISTS WERE WORKING ON THEIR OWN NEW BUILDING. THROUGHOUT 1888, BOTH METHODISTS AND BAPTISTS WORKED ON THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND AT THE SAME TIME WORKED ON THE METHODIST STRUCTURE. FOR THE METHODISTS, AARON CROWSON, SR. DONATED THE LAND; HIS SONS JOE, WEST, AND AARON JR, CUT THE TIMBER; AND J. W. HATCHER, JOE CROWSON, AND S. H. CLABOUGH DID MUCH OF THE ACTUAL BUILDING.

THE METHODIST CHURCH WAS COMPLETED FIRST, IN THE EARLY FALL. BUT BY COMMON AGREEMENT, IT REMAINED CLOSED UNTIL THE BAPTIST CHURCH HOUSE WAS FINISHED AS WELL. FOR ITS PART, THE BETHLEHEM METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH WAS A SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING, COMPLETE WITH A BELFRY THAT HOUSED A 400-POUND CHURCH BELL. IT ALSO WAS SURROUNDED BY A STURDY FENCE MADE OF LOCUST POSTS AND WHITE OAK PLANKS, AND HAD AN outhouse DOWN BY THE CREEK. BY AGREEMENT, BOTH CHURCHES PLANNED TO BE DEDICATED ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1888, THE METHODIST AT 10:00 A.M. AND THE BAPTIST IN THE AFTERNOON. LAWSON, NOTED AS A "FAMOUS SINGER AND PREACHER," AGREED TO PREACH AT BOTH SERVICES. AT THE 10:00 A.M. SERVICE, HE WAS ASSISTED BY THE REV. J. A. BAKER, WHO TECHNICALLY WAS THE CHURCH'S PASTOR AT THE TIME. THE BETHLEHEM TRUSTEES IN THE YEAR OF DEDICATION WERE LAWSON, AARON CROWSON, SR., HARVEY CAMERON, JAKE TARWATER, AND W.B. EMERT.

BY THE 1890S THE AREA HAD BECOME KNOWN AS WEARS VALLEY AND BY 1897 THE BETHLEHEM METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH HAD BECOME THE WEARS VALLEY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH. THE PREVIOUS YEAR, 1896, THE ENTIRE VALLEY MOURNED THE DEATH OF JAMES DUNN LAWSON AFTER A LONG ILLNESS. LAWSON HAD BEEN A MAJOR RELIGIOUS LEADER IN WEARS VALLEY FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS AND WAS A TRANSITIONAL FIGURE BETWEEN THE ITINERANT "EXHORTERS" WITH MINIMAL EDUCATION AND THE SEMINARY-TRAINED PASTORS. ACCORDING TO LAWSON, HE HAD TRAVELED OVER 40,000 MILES TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS, HAD WITNESSED HUNDREDS OF

CONVERSIONS, AND HAD MARRIED AROUND ONE HUNDRED COUPLES. HIS REMAINS WERE LAID TO REST IN THE VALLEY,

IN 1 90Q THE WEARS VALLEY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH HAD SEVENTY-ONE MEMBERS, INCLUDING TEN HATCHERS, NINE EMERTS, FIVE CROWSONS, AND ASSORTED BENSONS, BRYANS, CAMERONS, CLABOS, CONNERS, FRYES, LAWSONS, MCELDRYS, MCGILLS, MYERSES, RLDINGSES, RLMELS, TARWATERS, TRENTAMS, AND WHALEYS. A NEW CHURCH BELL WAS PURCHASED IN 1912 FOR \$30D TO REPLACE THE ORIGINAL. ONE, WHICH HAD CRACKED DURING ONE OF ITS TOLLINGS.

AS THE POPULATION OF WEARS VALLEY GREW, NOT ONLY DID CHURCH MEMBERSHIP INCREASE AT THE TWO ORIGINAL CHURCHES, BUT NEW CHURCHES WERE ESTABLISHED AS WELL. IN 1 9D2 HEADRICK CHAPEL WAS CONSTRUCTED, IN PART TO SERVE THE ADJOINING HEADRICK CEMETERY BUT ALSO AS A MEETING PLACE FOR FOUR DENOMINATIONS. THE LAST GROUP TO USE HEADRICK CHAPEL FOR WORSHIP SERVICES WAS THE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS. IN 2DD6 THE CHAPEL UNDERWENT A **MAJOR RESTORATION AND IT NOW IS LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.** NOWADAYS IT IS USED ALMOST **EXCLUSIVELY FOR FUNERALS, WEDDINGS, AND SPECIAL SINGINGS. ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER, THERE IS AN ALL-DAY OLD HARP SINGING THAT ATTRACTS SINGERS AND LISTENERS FROM SEVERAL STATES.**

IN THE 1 93OS A GROUP OF PEOPLE MOVED OUT OF THE ELKMONT SECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK AND, IN WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN A TREMENDOUS EFFORT, DISMANTLED THEIR CHURCH BUILDING (CALLED THE ELKMONT BAPTIST CHURCH) AND MOVED IT TO WEARS VALLEY, **WHERE IT WAS REASSEMBLED AND FORMALLY DEDICATED ON APRIL 17, 1 93B** AS THE VALLEY VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH. MEMBERSHIP GREW **RAPIDLY AND IN 1 995 A SUBSTANTIAL NEW CHURCH WAS BUILT BESIDE THE OLD ONE, WHICH THE MEMBERS WISELY CHOSE NOT TO TEAR DOWN.** THE VALLEY VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH IS PERHAPS THE LARGEST IN THE VALLEY IN TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP. AS WITH ALL, THEY ARE WONDERFUL NEIGHBORS.

ANOTHER GROUP THAT MOVED OUT OF THE ELKMDNT SECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK WAS THOSE WHO MOVED BOTH THE PARK SETTLEMENT SCHOOL AND THE FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH INTO WHAT IS NOW KNOWN AS HAPPY HOLLOW. THE SCHOOL WAS REASSEMBLED ON THE SITE OF THE PRESENT CHURCH, AND THE ORIGINAL CHURCH WAS RECONSTRUCTED ACROSS THE NARROW ROAD.

COVEMONT BAPTIST CHURCH WAS FOUNDED SOMEWHAT EARLIER, IN A GROVE NEAR THE MOUNTAINS. AT ONE TIME THE CHURCH ALSO WAS A SCHOOLHOUSE. LATER THE INDEPENDENT MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH (NOW THE CHURCH IN THE VALLEY) WAS ESTABLISHED. BOTH CAN JUSTLY CLAIM HEALTHY AND ACTIVE MEMBERSHIPS.

IN 1 946 THE METHODIST CHURCH INSTALLED ELECTRICITY, AND IN THE 1 950S A FELLOWSHIP HALL, KITCHEN, TWO REST ROOMS, AND THREE SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS WERE ADDED. AT THE SAME TIME, THE FLOOR IN THE SANCTUARY WAS REPLACED WITH TONGUE-AND-GROOVE HARDWOOD. SOMEWHAT LATER , A NEW HEATING SYSTEM, NEW CHURCH PEWS, PULPIT FURNITURE, COMMUNION TABLE, ALTAR RAILS, FLOWER STANDS, AND AN ORGAN WERE ADDED AS WELL. ARCHIE HATCHER REMEMBERS THAT BEFORE THE HEATING SYSTEM WAS INSTALLED THAT THE SANCTUARY WAS SO COLD THAT SERVICES WERE HELD IN THE SMALLER FELLOWSHIP HALL. THE NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS MUST HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY WELCOMED, SINCE BEFORE THAT CLASSES WERE CONDUCTED IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE SANCTUARY. SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS FOR MANY YEARS WERE JAKE A. TARWATER, HIS SON C. H. TARWATER, SR., AND IN TURN HIS SON C. H. TARWATER, JR., ALL OF WHOM KEPT METICULOUS MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL RECORDS, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN PRESERVED.

BY 1 976, THE YEAR OF OUR NATION'S BICENTENNIAL, CHURCH ATTENDANCE HAD DECLINED TO JUST A LARGE HANDFUL. TO BE SURE, THERE WERE 1 27 CHURCH MEMBERS ON THE ROLLS, BUT MANY HAD MOVED AWAY BUT STILL KEPT THEIR NAMES IN THE MEMBERSHIP RECORDS. IN THAT YEAR ALSO, THE CARILLON, MENTIONED EARLIER, WAS GIVEN BY C. H. TARWATER, JR. AND FRIENDS IN MEMORY OF HIS WIFE JEAN EVELYN TARWATER AND HIS PARENTS MR. AND MRS. C. H. TARWATER, SR.

IN THE 1 980S, HOWEVER, MANY PEOPLE WHO HAD VISITED WEARS VALLEY ON THEIR VACATIONS DECIDED TO RETIRE AND MOVE TO THE VALLEY TO STAY. NOT ONLY DID THEIR AFFILIATION INCREASE MEMBERSHIP FIGURES, BUT THEIR ENERGY, DEVOTION, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES HAD A DRAMATIC AND POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE VALLEY AS ON THE CHURCH ITSELF. IN FACT, NEXT TO TENNESSEE, MEMBERS ORIGINALLY FROM INDIANA, ILLINOIS, AND MICHIGAN PROBABLY ARE THE MOST NUMEROUS. NOT ONLY DID THESE FOLKS *FIND* A FRIENDLY CHURCH, BUT THEY CARRIED ON THE TRADITION OF FRIENDSHIP AND **WELCPME AS WELL,**

ANOTHER IMPORTANT GROUP THAT ADDED BOTH NUMBERS AND TALENT TO THE CHURCH AND THE VALLEY WERE THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BORN IN THE AREA, HAD MOVED AWAY, BUT HAD RETURNED TO SPEND THEIR GOLDEN YEARS IN THE PLACE OF THEIR BIRTH. SUCH PEOPLE INCLUDED BEN AND BLANCHE CROWSON, BILL AND INA FAYE CROWSON, AND BETTY Jo AND JERRY REAGAN. ANOTHER IMPORTANT PERSON WHO RETURNED WAS JOHN CT-ABO, AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS "UNCLE JOHNNY." CLABD REVIVED THE TRADITIONAL OLD HARP SINGING AT THE CHURCH (ON THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER LABOR DAY) AND LED IT FOR MANY YEARS.

IN 1 968 THE NATIONAL METHODIST CHURCH MERGED WITH THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN TO BECOME THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. FOR YEARS THE WEARS VALLEY METHODIST CHURCH HAD

BEEN ONE CHURCH ON A FOUR-CHURCH CIRCUIT, THE OTHERS BEING WALPEN'S CREEK, PLEASANT HILL, AND UNION GROVE. HOPING TO BECOME WHAT IS KNOWN AS A "SINGLE STATION CHURCH," IN 1998 WEARS VALLEY METHODISTS DECIDED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE CIRCUIT. ONE IMMEDIATE BENEFIT WAS THAT THEY WOULD HAVE THEIR OWN MINISTER, EVEN IF AT FIRST IT WOULD BE ONLY A PART-TIME ONE. THAT PERSON WAS THE REV. WILLIAM "BILL" MCALLISTER, A CAREER U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN WHO, WITH HIS WIFE NANCY, HAD RETIRED TO THE VALLEY. HE ASSUMED THOSE DUTIES IN 1999. BILL'S INCREDIBLE ENERGY AND COMMITMENT WERE MOST WELCOMED, AS WERE THOSE OF HIS SUCCESSOR, THE REV. BEECHER DUNSMORE (ZAAZ-ZDOV), ALSO A RETIRED METHODIST PASTOR WHO, WITH HIS WIFE SARAH, HAD MOVED TO MARYVILLE. INDEED, THE TWO MEN WERE SO ACTIVE AND ENERGETIC THAT IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THEY WERE TECHNICALLY ONLY PART-TIME PASTORS. AND THEIR WIVES WERE ACTIVE AS WELL, NANCY AS A MEMBER OF THE CHOIR AND SARAH AS SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER AND CHURCH PIANIST. FINALLY, IN 2007, **THE CHURCH WELCOMED ITS FIRST FULL-TIME PASTOR, THE REV. BILL BEARD.** BILL'S WIFE KIM IS ALSO A FULL-TIME METHODIST PASTOR, IN MARYVILLE. THEIR DAUGHTER KATIE HAS SERVED AS AN ACOLYTE AND HAS SUNG IN CHURCH AS WELL.

BY THE 1990S IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT THE WEARS VALLEY METHODISTS ONCE AGAIN HAD OUTGROWN THEIR FACILITIES. IN 2003, A NEW FAMILY LIFE CENTER COMPLETE WITH A LARGE FELLOWSHIP HALL, KITCHEN, AND FIVE ADDITIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS WAS ADDED. DUE TO THE COMMITMENT OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS, THE ENTIRE NOTE WAS PAID OFF IN JUST UNDER THREE YEARS, IN 2006, AN ALMOST ASTOUNDING ACCOMPLISHMENT. THE NEW FACILITIES ARE IN ALMOST CONSTANT USE, FOR MEETINGS, YOUNG AT HEART LUNCHEONS AND PROGRAMS, FELLOWSHIP EVENTS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

IN THE YEAR 2011 THE WEARS VALLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH WILL CELEBRATE ITS 125TH ANNIVERSARY ALTHOUGH, IN FACT, THE CHURCH'S HISTORY IS CONSIDERABLY OLDER THAN THAT. EACH DAY THE CHIMES RING, THEY REMIND EVERYONE WITHIN EARSHOT — METHODIST AND BAPTIST ALIKE-- OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF WEARS VALLEY WHO HAVE TRIED AND CONTINUE TO TRY AS BEST THEY CAN TO OBEY THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDMENTS: TO LOVE GOD AND TO LOVE THEIR NEIGHBORS. "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, TO US A SON IS GIVEN."

BRUCE WHEELER,
WITH THANKS TO THE EARLIER WORK
AND ASSISTANCE OF EMMA JEAN KING,
IDA HEADRICK MYERS, REBECCA
MCKNIGHT, BLANCHE CROWSON,
BETTY Jo REAGAN, NELLE HATCHER,
ARCHIE HATCHER, BARB LEGRAND,
PRESTON JOSLIN,

CLING REAGAN, PHIL BULL, MIKE MCCARTER, TRACY PATTY, AND ALL TOSE WHO HAVE PRESERVED PARTS OF THE HISTORY OF WEARS VALLEY, THE METHODIST CHURCH, AND ALL CIF THE VALLEY'S PEOPLE.

**PASTORS OF THE BETHLEHEM METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH AND THE WEARS VALLEY UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH, 1867-2007**

I B67	J. D. LAWSON
1 B6S-1 S69	NO RECORD AVAILABLE
1S70-1B71	J. B. SEATON
1 S72	J. D. LAWSON
1 873	J. B, SEATON
1B74-1B75	J.H.JENNINGS
1 B76	J. D. LAWSON
1 877	J. M, DURHAM
1B7B-1B79	E. M. CLARK
1SBD-1SB1	D. H. HODSON
1BB2-1BB3	C. D. MUNCEY
1 SS4	R. E. PIERCE
1SS5-1BS6	J. A. BAKER
I SB7-1 sag	J. A. NICHOLSON
1 S90	BENJAMIN CRIST
1891-1892	L. S. FULLER
1893-1894	W. B. RIPPETAC
	A. A. NEWMAN
1S95	NO RECORD AVAILABLE
1 B96	M. A. RULE
1 B97-1 B99	NO RECORD AVAILABLE
19DO-19O1	E. H. BRANNEAU
1 902	NO RECORD AVAILABLE
1 903	B. W. MCMAHAN
19D4-19O5	A. M. ROSE
19O6-1913	W. M. BULL
1914-1915	W. L. GROOVER
1916-191B	J. O. COX
1919-192O	M. B. GASS
1921- 923	J. M. DEW
1 925	M. F. Goss
924-1 927	E. M. BOYD
926-1 932	DEWEY JENKINS
92B-1 936	W. E. D. ROBESON
1 937-1 938	C. V, BELLAMY

1939	W. D. WILKERSON
1940	A. N. DAILEY
1941-1942	C. WALTER MARTIN
1943	R. L. STAPLETON
1944-1945	R. M. HUFF
1946-1950	CARL BATES
1951	E. C. TRENTHAM
1952	WILLARD d'REAR
1953	VIRTRUE SHARPE
1954	J. A. NELSON
1955-1956	THOMAS MCGILL
1957-1960	GLENN PATTERSON
1961-1963	Teo BAKER
1964-1966	Q DELL LAFON
1967-1969	EUGENE LdVELL
1970-1971	JAMES T. ARNOLD
1972-1973	HENRY HARLOW
1974-1975	FRANK WIER
1976-1977	BRUCE HENSLEY
1978-1979	BCNNIE HUSULEY
1980-1981	HERMAN GATE
1982-1983	BILL MCALLISTER
1984-1985	BEECHER DUNSMORE
1986-1987	BILL BEARD