

1882 - 1982 SENATH CENTENNIAL



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

It is not possible to ascertain when Methodism made its appearance in Senath or Salem Township. We do know from stories handed down that circuit riders came into homes and held religious services. Among the earliest Methodist settlers was the Rice family who moved in this area in about 1874 and the Bost family in 1874. Mr. J. B. Dial came about 1876. Descendants of these families report that Methodist Services were then being held in the Austin home two miles north of Senath. Some records state that a Carrol Johnson came in this area in 1860 as a teen ager and told of attending Methodist services at a log building. It is safe to surmise that one or more of the early Methodist congregations began holding services in the Salem Union church when it was erected. There, all denominations of the countryside were permitted to worship. Methodist, Baptist, and Christian people contributed to its erection and upkeep. This was in 1885 and few records exist from the date of building this church. The records do show that in 1892, a Rev. Walton suggested that the Methodist people were strong enough to maintain a Methodist church alone.

In 1893, the Methodist group withdrew and built Bethel Methodist Church, one mile north and one mile east of Senath. The land was bought from the Hicks family deeded to J. F. Price, J. W. Esten, William Haislip, Carrol Johnson and E. C. Austin, trustees. That registry showed a membership of 200. Besides the men named in the deed, J. B. Dial and D. F. Ham were recognized church leaders.

Apparently Bethel Methodist Church prospered for several years. The last name entered on the membership

roll was dated 1910, while the Rev. Doherty was minister. There record keeping seems to stop. While J. W. Ham and Ed S. Tetley's names appear on pastor's lists, the record is incomplete and the last days of this church are obscured.

In the 1940's, when the Dunklin County Historical Society was in its prime, Sue Oliver did much research, with the help of other citizens, and found that facts concerning the old Bethel Church did exist. No one knows what happened to the organization during 1910 and 1917. No available records exist. Evidence to support the fact that the old Bethel Church was the nucleus of the Senath Methodist Church does exist. Some individuals who were members of the Bethel Church transferred their membership to Senath and became Charter members there. The Bethel Church registry records their dismissal. That registry, from which much of this information was taken, is now filed with the Senath United Methodist records. When it was placed there is not known. In 1918, Rev. J. T. Ricketts was given authority to dispose of the Bethel Church property according to his best judgment. No records show when or how this property was placed in the hands of the Senath Church.

Therefore, the Senath United Methodist Church, as it is known today, is still a comparatively young church. It is known that in 1904, the Rev. J. W. Oliver, minister of Harkey's Chapel Circuit, organized a church at Senath and held services there. However, there is neither record nor memory of a board of stewards or of trustees before 1910. Several citizens said they remembered, as children, of the Baptist and Methodist groups holding a joint

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