

Methodism in Pelham Valley Pelham, Tennessee, 1813-2002

Janelle Layne Coats

Methodism traces its beginnings to John Wesley, a Protestant clergyman and reformer in the Anglican Church or Church of England. Wesley wanted his societies to remain a part of the Church of England, but Anglican clergy resisted, and his society members needed pastoral care, so a break with the Church of England took place in 1784 when Wesley ordained Thomas Coke as the first superintendent of the Methodist Church in America and gave Coke the authority to ordain Francis Asbury to serve in the same capacity. The new Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in 1784 under Coke and Asbury's leadership. This new denomination spread rapidly, chiefly through the work of traveling preachers known as circuit riders who took Methodism into the rural areas and to the frontier.

One of these circuit riders was Isaac Conger who kept a diary in 1813 of his activities as he rode the Elk River Circuit in the Nashville District of the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church. He traveled and preached throughout the present counties of Bedford, Coffee, Grundy, Franklin, Lincoln, Moore, and Warren. The following account was taken from Conger's diary. The five excerpts describe his work along the Elk River (Elkhead) in Pelham Valley. The text appears with actual spellings, capitalization, etc.¹

find my strength . . . fail it stormed last knight and a heavy rain fell
I started went through the rain to cross the barren fork 12 mile no one
com to the meeting next went on to Matthew's Catcht one and have
the promis of 2 more went that evening to head of Elk Next day
Preachd a funeral over and old wicked man appeared desiours on his
deathbed O how dangerous to put of the one thing needful to a dying
hour I had not much liberty but feel Crampt on thinking of his being
in fire and pain while I am preaching had good time in meeting went

on next day to Pong springs of bradley's Creek with Bro. Dean. Next day preached to a large congregation and had liberty Shouts and a hard trial in Settling a dispute between 2 of the sisters. It was ended in peace by a long trial and the people broke and got to bed a little after 1 o'clock this morning feel unwell went on feel some times like getting off my horse and lying down. . .

. . . Come to Noahs fork and unexpectedly my horse swam got water in my saddlebags among my books & went on to Ross's dried some of my papers & started again barren fork run nearly over my horse went on wet to meeting & I believe has as great liberty as ever I had after meeting turnd out a whore & then went on to father Stanfields & dried my clothes & saddlebags & papers staid all knight & in the morning Brother Fitchgarrill went on with me to meeting and a cold time we had of it they wont pray here & so dirty they cannot hav Religion staid & eat some but with reluctance the Milk I could not eat for I believe the 2 pet pigs they had in the house had eat in the tin and it had not been washed the dirtyest Cup I ever saw to eat out of in my life I must be very hungry if ever I eat there again & they must mend or lose preaching went to Br Jacob Deans that knight & next day went across Elk River and preacht a funeral a mixed multitude & they were mostly tender I then returned back to Bralys Creek to Morrows and staid all knight & feel Refresht some but want the assistance of God today as I hear there are some of the Baptists feel so warm a side for us that it is expected they will join us so I shall pray for the lord to assist me this day & let us have a good tim

I seen a woman have a fit in the morning & the man at knight the first that I ever saw have Convulsion fits to see the Godness & the mercy of God in preserving his people how thankful ought I to be I lay down near 1 o'clock & Slept & in the morning feel worn out so much I am hardly able to ride and have to ride about 21 mile I have no appetite to eat any this morning & Start on to the head of Elk the day was remarkable warm & when I got to the place more people were come out than was common I got up but very weak & had liberty but not Strength Spoke from 1 Thessalonians 5:21 in proving the necessity of Sanctification some got very much out of humor with me call themselves Baptists who plead the doctrine of the devil & Say we cant live without sin making out sin is necessary to keep us alive & as necessary as our dayly food I think such people do the drudgery of the divil who plead for sin as be necessary I think prejudice is a the

bottom of it I felt so week I did not hold Class meeting as Br. Box was not there, but soon After he come & went on home & after resting eat my dinner & feel refresht went to see a nursery of apple trees of about 3 acres & returned to Br. Boxes & Slept feel some sorenes in my Breast & broke down so I can hardly Stir, yet bless the Lord Can feel a good Conscience toward God & this day 17th of June preach at morrows on bradlys Creek had a good time had liberty 3 joined Society & Hugh Gentry a baptist give me his hand & I set his name down his feelings was hurt & that hurt my feelings meeting was appointed here for knight but I Feel very bad am sorry for I have had only one knight rest this week that is so hard I feel two much outdone the people Come out & the house would not hold the people we had only a little Stir among the people old mother morrow was taken Sick very suddenly & very delireous all knight this morning feel well altho I have had meeting 4 knights & only one to rest in the time I see a great necessity of preaching as often as I can Started on & went to Captain Neels on Duck River & preacht.

Slept restless all knight & feel very sore this morning & went on to my appointment preacht but the people are Cold & lifeless & dirty went on after meeting to Lusk Gap to have Meeting at knight preacht but the people were Cold & I don't know if there was any good done next day I went on to Box's & there were only very few we had only a dull time for when I was here before the Baptist got very angrey at me for insisting on holiness of heart Next day I went on to Morrows had a degree of liberty & very good time & in the evening went home with Br. Bradley or went to his house staid until next day.

Slept well & this morning must go on for I have to ride over 20 Miles before meeting so I shall conclud(e) for this time Sept 8 I went on & when I got to the appointment people were gone for Br. Box did not give it out at 2 oclock a he was to a done I staid at Brother Box's untill next day and he went with me to Deans the old man lays in a very low state with his thigh broke I preacht & we had a serious time some Shouting we sat late talking after knight for some come to see me for the last time in the morning after breakfast I started and went on to Captain Neels and the people had been waiting some time I preacht & we had a melting time. . .

Pelham Methodist Church

Perhaps it was from the work of this early circuit rider, Isaac Conger, that

a Methodist Church was established about five miles from Elkhead in the community of Pelham in 1823.

According to Franklin County, Tennessee land records, on 19 February 1823, Solomon King Goodman deeded one acre of land to create the site of the old Pelham United Methodist Church.² Goodman and Aunt Polexi Neville, who lived on land behind the church, provided lumber for that first crude building. It is not known exactly when the first church was built there; however, it is known that the building was dedicated by Rev. John B. McFerrin of Nashville. This Pelham church is thought to have been the first Methodist Episcopal Church in Grundy County, Tennessee.

In 1856 a larger building was erected on the same site as the first building. This new building was dedicated by Fountain E. Pitts of Nashville, Tennessee. A third church building was erected on the same site during the 1906 term of William R. Wilson. John Quincy Adams Brashear furnished the lumber and built slat seats for this church. He also fabricated the chancel rail used in the building.

New steps were built in 1925 by a youth organization known as the Epworth League. Still later, a new front porch was built with funds donated by the Women's Society of Christian Service.

On 1 May 1948, additional land was purchased by the trustees of the Pelham Methodist Church. That is the lot lying between the church and Jewell Goodman's store, Pelham Food Market. The land was purchased for \$350 from Winnie Guinn, Addie B. Hayworth, Frank Willis, Rutha Rutledge, Emma Southern, Elisha Willis, Gertrude Kennerly, and Mable Moore.³ These were citizens of Pelham's black community which was located primarily along the road located directly behind the old Methodist Church in Pelham. It goes on down by Johnny Payne and Jacky Payne's houses and now dead ends at Paul Parks' house. The road originally took travelers to Bell's Mill on Elk River. Not only was the mill a place for grinding grain, but a popular place for baptizing.

Jenny Conry Rogers, who had been a nurse during World War I, donated a console and speakers for playing chimes. Speakers for playing chimes were mounted on the roof of the church and later enclosed with a steeple.

In the mid-1960s four classrooms were constructed, and a complete kitchen and two bathrooms were installed. In the early 1970s Marjorie Conry Burnett helped raise funds to install central heating and air, new storm doors and windows, ceiling insulation, and new underpinning. Hollis Cox, a local

carpenter and son-in-law of Hervey Medley, renovated the interior of the church also. In 1978 vinyl siding was added to the outside of the church. That work was done by Boyce Lyndon Wilson.

Over the years, many additions were made to the church. The inscribed stained glass windows were placed in memory and in honor of Dr. L. A. Carden, R. H. Rogers & Lee Goodman Conry, John Gallagher, the R. L. Crouch family, John David Wilder family, Mr. & Mrs. P. T. Gilliam, and Harvey Hamby. (Harvey Hamby's name was not inscribed on the window, but it is the window between the choir loft and the church office.) In 1978 new cushioned pews were bought by individuals at a cost of \$300 each. These pews bear the following inscriptions:

In Memory of

Tom Gallagher & Mattie Patton

Cam & Lorene Conry

Mrs. Betty Tate

The Alex Gunn family

Lude C. Goodman

Bruce Earl Bonner by his mother and father

Mr. & Mrs. Chester Morris

W. N. & Biddie Brazile

Wade & Florence Wilson

Dr. & Mrs. U. B. Bowden

Mr. & Mrs. John Gallagher

Joe & Eva Payne

Mr. & Mrs. Ben Wilson

Elbert & Elsie (Payne) Layne

In Honor of

Marjorie Burnett

The Pattons

L. H. & Gladys Burnett & family

Mr. & Mrs. Roy Wright

The Bob Brothers Family

The Sheltons

The organ was bought by the Emmett Clay and J. E. "Bo" Medley families in their memory. In 1986 new choir robes were purchased and a new storage closet was built by Rev. Art Smith. The robes and storage facility was given by Henrietta Bowden Ray in memory of J. C. "Red" Ray and Dr. and Mrs. U. B. Bowden, her husband and parents respectively. The porch was enclosed to make a vestibule dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Clara Brashear White.

Charter members of Pelham Methodist Episcopal Church, South include C. T. White and wife Mary, John Howard and wife Lucinda, Poxi Neville, Solomon King Goodman, Martha Bell, Elizabeth Neville, Eliza Rust, Julia Warren, R. G. White, Aggie Cornelison, Billy Green and wife Mary, Martin Gilliam and wife Clementine, Mollie Wilkinson, Tom Blair and wife Violet, Mollie Duncan, Texarcana Haynes, Edward Green and wife Maggie, Martha Cox, Jimmy LeVan and wife Susan, Sarah Green Parks, William Green and

wife Sara Elliot, Hampton Gunn and wife Josephine, William Green and wife Bettie Odom.

Church superintendents (1885-2002) include C. T. White, Dr. L. A. Carden, Ray Hines, John Howard, John Gallagher, Charles Emmett “Jack” White, R. H. White, Glenn Bonner, Larry Shelton, Jim Brashear, Bob Cox, Elsie Brothers, Dr. D. H. Bryan, Wayne Kenneth Wilson, Jack White, and currently Tim Rieder.

Remembrances and Recollections of Church Leaders

John Gallagher joined the Pelham Methodist Church around 1900. He taught the adult Sunday School Class for 45 years and was superintendent of the Sunday School for that length of time as well. When Glenn Bonner took his place as superintendent, the church gave John a recliner.

I remember him going to church early on Sunday mornings and building a fire in the big stove. He studied his Sunday School lesson every day and was interested in the church as long as he lived.⁴

Solomon King Goodman was the son of John and Mary King Goodman. He was born in Rowan County, North Carolina in 1799, married Elizabeth Burrow, the daughter of Henry and Lucy Porch Burrow, on 25 February 1801 in Rowan County, and died 1827 in Franklin County, Tennessee (Pelham was in Franklin County at that time). Solomon King Goodman served in the House of Commons in North Carolina in 1810 and again in 1815. While in North Carolina, he and Dann Merrell became the guardians of the children of Joseph Hale. By 23 July 1817, Solomon was in Franklin County, Tennessee where he bought 220 acres of land from Andrew Erwin of Augusta, Georgia. On 27 December 1818, Solomon K. Goodman bought a tract of land on the Elk River from Zebadiah Payne. Between 1820 and 1823, Solomon K. Goodman bought and sold several tracts of land. On 19 February 1823, he donated an acre of land to the Pelham Methodist Church of which he became a charter member.

Between 1823 and 1826, Solomon K. Goodman made several land and slave transactions in and around Winchester, Franklin County area, including town lots in Winchester. Solomon’s will was recorded in Franklin County on 12 August 1828. It mentions his wife, Elizabeth, and children: Eliza Adams, Harriet James, Madison Goodman, Solomon Poindexter Goodman, and Mary Goodman. It also mentions slaves by name, which wasn’t a widespread practice at the time. The names included were: Joe, Suckey, Manuel,

Caroline, Harry, and John. Solomon must have trusted Harry immensely as in his will, he stated “my old Negro man Harry leave on the plantation to be supported and assist his mistress.”⁵

Kenneth Wilson served as Sunday School superintendent, teacher, lay leader, certified lay speaker, delegate to annual conference, chairman of Grundy County Methodist Men’s Club, and a plethora of other offices. He also served in the U. S. Army in World War II. Kenneth always reminds us to honor our veterans for their service and sacrifice made for our freedoms.



Kenneth Wilson and Rev. Leon Norris

Since he lived just across the road from the Methodist parsonage, Ken-

neth was usually the first contact a new preacher had with the Pelham Charge. He was also the closest neighbor with a lawn mower, lawn and garden tools, and any other paraphernalia a new preacher might need. Needless to say, he made the lives of many newly appointed ministers much less complex than they might have been if he had not been their neighbor.

Kenneth retired from the U. S. Postal Service. Both he and his wife, Narcia Brazile Wilson, are active members of Pelham UMC.

Ray Hines is the person to ask if you want to know anything about the history of Pelham or who has ever attended the Pelham United Methodist Church. Although Ray is a native of Kentucky, he has lived in Pelham since 1947, and his wife, Janie Gallagher Hines, is a native of Pelham. Mr. John Gallagher was Janie’s father, so she has heard all the old stories from him. Together Ray and Janie know our history. Ray served as Sunday School superintendent, on the church administrative board, as membership secretary, as well as in almost every capacity in the church. He is known for his bass singing in the choir and for being the comic relief in almost any situation. Ray can be serious, however. When there are sick in the community, Ray and Janie are dedicated visitors.

Jack White's real name is Charles Emmett, but everybody calls him Jack. As of 2002, Jack is retired from managing the Grundy Farmers' Coop in Pelham. Jack's association with the Pelham UMC has been a lifelong one. He has been Sunday School superintendent and has served on numerous committees in the church. He is married to Janice Burnett White, who teaches in the Coffee County School System. They are the parents of three wonderfully talented daughters: Lisa, Lydia, and Carol White, all of whom are students at UT Knoxville. Jack is a veteran of the Vietnam Conflict era.

Larry Wayne Shelton has served as Sunday School superintendent and most recently as the chairman of the Building Committee of Phase II of our church construction. He and his wife Reeda Medley Shelton are very active in almost every program the church has. It is not uncommon to see Larry hauling tables, play equipment, or program props at any hour of the day or night. He is the manager of Tyson Hatchery in Pelham. He and Reeda are parents of Dustin and Dera Shelton.

Elsie Harlan Brothers has the distinction of being the only woman to have served as Sunday School superintendent. Currently she is the church treasurer. She always sees the positives in any situation. She and her husband Bob are the parents of Roxann, Robin, Matthew, and John Mark. Bob Brothers died in 1994. Elsie is an active member of Aglow, an organization for Christian women.

Tim Rieder is our current Sunday School superintendent. He also served as the chairman of the Building Committee for Phase I of our new church. Tim; his father, Bill; and daughter Kelley came to us from Valley Home a few years ago and all have been assets to the church. Tim is employed as a mail carrier in Franklin County.

Piano players at Pelham United Methodist Church (1885-2002) have included Vera Gilliam, Myrtle Gunn, Lon White, Dora Brashear, Laura Howard Henley, Ida Gunn White, Della Bowden, Willie Henson Jones, Tressie Carden Wilson, Mable Martin, Anna Jean Willis, Blanche Payne, Jo Ann Gunn, Laura Burnett Barker, Ruth Wilson, Eula Brashear, Blanche Payne, Barbara Ann Wilson, Deborah Ann White, and Charlene Norris. The current pianist is Reeda Kaye Medley Shelton, and her substitutes are Lisa White, Lydia White, and Carol White.

Song leaders have included Sumner Bell, Mary Ellen Patton, Wayne Cooper, and Mark Sartain. The current leader is Drucilla Clay Medley, and her substitute is Megan Coats Benton. Raymond G. Hines always leads the

birthday song nowadays, and Reeda Medley Shelton directs the choir.

Called to the Ministry from Pelham Methodist Church

Lee Medley was called to the ministry while attending Pelham Methodist Church. When he felt the call, he spoke with J. Dallas Bass, District Superintendent in Murfreesboro. Rev. Bass helped Lee to get into Martin Methodist College to begin the training for the ministry. He later attended Athens Alabama College and Vanderbilt University where he earned his Master's Degree. Lee was appointed to many different churches and charges during his thirty-six years of preaching. Even though he is retired now, Lee still does some lay speaking at Providence Church. Lee and his wife, Nikki, live at Miller's Crossroads. They have a son, Phil Medley.

Judy Patton Rickner had a successful career in the medical field in Ohio for 22 years and later at the University of the South for 11 years, but when she experienced a disabling eye disease which prevented her from continuing in that line of work, she retired and moved to Pelham where she had grown up. While attending Pelham United Methodist Church in the early 1980s, she was baptized, then began teaching adult Sunday School, attended lay speaking classes, then local pastor's classes, and finally classes from Emory University. She has spoken at numerous locations throughout middle Tennessee as a lay speaker and was appointed as pastor at Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church in Coffee County where she served 9 years until her retirement in 2001. Judy lives next door to the new Pelham United Methodist Church with her daughter, Julie. Judy has another daughter, Debbie Rickner, who lives in Manchester, Tennessee. Judy gives much of the credit for her ministry training to her mentor Rev. Thomas DeRamus.

John Kennedy has become a regular in the pulpit of the Pelham United Methodist Church during the last several months. John joined the church in 2001 after taking the "Disciple" course of Bible study taught by Bro. Andy Perry. He has taken steps to become a lay speaker and hopes to continue with his training for local pastor. We hope that he will be the third minister who is sponsored by the Pelham United Methodist Church. John is married to Tressie Jo Gallagher Kennedy.

New Church for Pelham United Methodists

A ground breaking ceremony to pave the way for this new church was held 3 May 1998. Pastor Andy Perry led the congregation in a litany of dedication.

Pastor: To the glory of God, in the presence of this congregation, I now direct that ground be broken for the Pelham United Methodist Church. The responsibility and the privilege rests upon us to cause a building to rise here that shall be a house of this people of God and a place devoted to the worship of almighty God and to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That a church may meet here where children shall learn to love God and grow in grace and goodness, and in favor with God and all people.

Children: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here where youth shall be inspired to pray and serve.

Youth: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here where the heavy laden shall find inner peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

Ray Family Representatives: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here where God is worshiped in prayer and praise, where the Word of God shall be so read and preached that it shall become the living Word, and the Sacraments so celebrated that all life shall become sacramental.

Building Committee: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here where multitudes shall be refreshed in spirit, relieved from pain, released from bondage, and redeemed from sin.

Older Adults: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here where the grace of God may make our human lives into a Christ like love and our homes places of living witness for that realm where Christ is Lord.

Adults: **We break this ground today.**

Pastor: That a church may meet here from which, by the power of your Holy Spirit, your people are sent forth into this community and all the world as champions of justice and peace to all peoples.

Dignitaries: **We break this ground today.**

From this ceremony the process was begun to erect a new Pelham United Methodist Church on land given by Henrietta Ray. It was built in two phases, with the education building and fellowship hall being completed in the first phase then the sanctuary being completed in the second phase. Tim Rieder and Melda Jacobs were the chairpersons of the Building Committee during the first phase. Larry Shelton served as the chairman of the second phase. Larry's speech at the building dedication on 16 December 2001

summarizes the amazing process that evolved.

About 15 years ago the Pelham United Methodist Church was given a very unique opportunity or challenge by Henrietta Ray. The Church was willed 2-½ acres of land with the stipulation it was to build a place of worship on it. If a place of worship were not started in a 10-year period, the property would go to someone else. Along with the property, the Church was entrusted with enough money to build a foundation.



Henrietta Ray, Grace Gilliam, and Melrose Gilliam Wilson

At the start of the 10-year period, the Church had basically no money. During the 10-year period a survey was done to get an idea of the potential for the Pelham area. The survey came back that there was good potential. During this time, there was prayer and scripture searching to try to determine God's will for this church. One scripture that comes to mind comes from 2 Corinthians 9:6: 'But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.'

As time ran out, it was decided to accept the challenge. During that 10-year time, the foundation money had almost doubled. Also about that time, we received a large sum of money from the Betty Wilkinson Tate estate. An architect, Brian Tune, was hired to draw plans, and bids were taken. It was found that we needed much more money than we had. About that time Ellis and Naomi Clay made the first of several large donations, and we suddenly had enough money to do the classrooms and the fellowship hall. They were built by Robertson and Vaughn Construction with money left over, but not near enough for a sanctuary.

If you have never been personally involved in a building project of any kind, you have missed an education. Nothing happens like you want it to. It starts later, takes longer, costs more, and when you are done, you can always see something you wish you had done

differently. This project was all of these with the exception of one. The second phase was built 'cost plus', and the project came in way under budget. Our contractor, Rick Brindley, had our best interest at heart and was a good steward of our money. He worked with us to use our tax-exempt status to get the best prices we could. Suppliers gave us breaks on our purchases, and members did everything they could to help save money.

This project has been the most miraculous thing I have ever been involved in. I am very proud to be a part of this congregation. I am proud that we stepped out on faith to do this. I was the proudest when we voted to go ahead and borrow the money to finish the (second phase of) the building. As it turned out, we never had to borrow any money. About 15 years ago, I think everyone thought we had about as much chance having a building like this as we did moving a mountain, but someone had the faith of a mustard seed.

I truly believe that God was the architect of this building, and he had a building schedule and that is what we went by. As everyone involved in the process can say, when it looked like we had gone about as far as we could go, someone would literally walk through the door with something we needed or the means to go on. And this is still happening today. It happened just this weekend with all the beautiful landscaping (provided by David and Paula Champion Hillis in memory of the Alex and Bettie Gunn family.)

The way the building time period worked, CDs grew and matured in full, before we needed them. Some building materials actually got cheaper. Donations came in, some exactly when needed. Donations came from people I did not know, and from people I wondered why they were giving to this church.

Many people donated money and things we needed. Many donated time to fundraisers, cleaning, and doing anything they could. Individuals used their talents to build, organize, and ask for and get donations. Others gave words of encouragement. People took charge and got things done. Some worked 40-plus hours a week doing anything they could.

The building is almost done, but there are still a few things we would like to do. We are going to light the parking lot as soon as possible. We would like to someday pave the parking lot and mark it off so that we can better utilize our parking space.

The road to Pelham is changing, and we have made a big change. We have a wonderful facility in a great location. The pews, the

furniture, and the windows never looked better than they do now. Even the same Christmas decorations look different. They look better. The choir never sounded better. If you missed the musical a few weeks back, you really missed a blessing.



Bettie Gunn, Marjorie Burnett, Fannie Roberts, Esther Brashear, and Rev. Roy Wright (circa 1981)

I would like to thank all the people who helped make this possible, the people who donated their time and money to get us where we are today. Since the establishment of the Pelham United Methodist Church in 1823, I feel many people have come to know God by attending this church or their lives have been touched by someone who has or is attending church. I feel that everything that has happened is the result of seed sown, some of them many years ago.

We have started several outreach programs that have the potential only limited by the time donated to them. The Golden Age Fellowship and Freaky Friday have tremendous potential. We have a newsletter and a youth program on Sunday evenings, and Holy Grounds on Sunday mornings. We are trying to reach out and touch lives. We live in a time when people expect instant results and instant gratification. We have not experienced instant results. This church building did not get here instantly, but we are sowing seeds.

Perhaps the work we are doing now will be like the grass seeds in the yard. When the work was begun on the yard, it did not look too promising. The red clay was hard as pavement, and the clods were as hard as bricks. The people that worked on the yard did everything they knew to do. They finally did what they thought was right. The seeds were sown bountifully, and then they turned it over to God, and you are seeing the results now. I think that is what we are doing now with our programs. Thanks again to everyone, and everyone deserves a pat on the back for a job well done. The building is almost done, but

the foundation has just been laid to reach out and bring people to God. Much has been given to this church, this community, and this country. We live in one of the best places on earth at one of the best times. I'd like to leave you with this thought from Luke 12:48: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Presiding over the dedication was the Murfreesboro District Superintendent Dr. James Clardy. Both Dr. Clardy and Mr. Ellis Clay spoke during the ceremony as well.

Additions have continued to be made. A new pavilion was the brain child of Tyler Brothers. He brought the idea before the Administrative Board as his Eagle Scout project. The board unanimously approved. Tyler, his scout troop, fellow Eagle Scout candidate Dustin Shelton and his father Larry Shelton; Tyler's father, Matt Brothers; scout leaders Danny Bean and _____ Myers; church members David Jacobs, Bud Wilson and others completed the building. The heavy tables and benches placed in the pavilion are from the old P. T. Gilliam Store that stood on the corner lot in Pelham. These tables and furniture were used for years as lunchroom tables at Pelham School.

The parking lot has been lit. Lighting has been installed by David Jacobs & Matt Brothers, who are trustees, with the help of Sequatchee Valley Electric Cooperative.

Grundy County Road Superintendent Norman "Junebug" Meeks has allowed his crew to excavate the parking area, ditch, and gravel the area. We are in the process of paving the parking lot with a \$10,000 gift made by Elsie Harlan Brothers.



Pelham United Methodist Church, 2002

David Jacobs, Matt Brothers, Bud Wilson, Bill Rieder, Larry Shelton, Jack White, Keith Gunn, and Tom Patton have seeded the lawn, erected the church sign, installed blinds

and folding walls, and stained glass windows.⁶

Sources of Funding

Funds were raised through many outright donations. \$1,385 was given as memorials and honoraria for purchasing stained glass. Memorials included those for Pack Medley, Mable Nottingham (who is the mother of Melda Jacobs), Ina Sue Jacobs Gurley, Charles Jacobs, Louise Metcalf Conry, and Emmett Clay. Kenneth and Narcia Brazile Wilson also sponsored a window. \$11,000 was donated for the sound system by Jewell Hamby Goodman, Melrose Hamby Holder, Wayne and Mary Elizabeth Francis Shelton, Larry and Reeda Medley Shelton, Clifton and Drucilla Clay Medley, and by Geraldine Conry Lentz in memory of her mother Lorene Wilson Conry. Money left to the choir fund by Henrietta Bowden Ray was also used for the sound system. The new road took some of our land, bringing in \$6,095. We sold our old church to Buck Partin and his congregation, the Church of Jesus Christ, for \$68,000. Pledges amounted to \$2,050.

The 12 stained glass windows located on each side of the sanctuary were purchased by individuals and families for \$5,276. These were from Elsie Harlan Brothers in memory of Bob Brothers, the Sartain family by Janette "Susie" Sartain, Tom and Mary Ellen Patton in memory of the Patton and Roberts families, The Janelle Coats family (Chris, Megan, Riley and Ryan Benton), Matt and Renee Brothers family, Tom and Mary Ellen Patton by their children, Jewell Hamby Goodman in memory of Lude C. Goodman, Melrose Hamby Holder in memory of Edd Holder, the James F. and Judi Gunn family, Bud and Nell Sampley Wilson in memory of their son David R. Wilson, Willie Jo Sitz Medley in memory of Pack Medley, and the Robert, Brenda, and Val Sitz family. Lighting in the sanctuary was donated by Ray and Janie Gallagher Hines.

The memorial crosses on the building were purchased for \$315 in honor and memory of Emmett and Elsie Haynes White, and Jim and Louvina Meeks Burnett. Other donations totaled \$9,915. We held fundraisers such as craft bazaars, spaghetti suppers, waffle suppers, and a barbeque. We have had consignment sales, a cedar chest give away (chest given by Ralph & Helen Meeks Medley), ornament sales, and yard sales. Wal-Mart in Manchester matched our yard sale earnings up to \$500 when we held them in their parking lot. We have recycled aluminum cans and have been fortunate enough to get rebates from Bi-Lo Bonus Cards.

Fundraising efforts have brought us closer together as we have worked side by side and cooperatively to raise this money. Practically everybody in the whole congregation has worked in some capacity to bring about this church building and to further the work of our Lord.

The total cost of the building was about \$470,000. Yes, it is miraculous to have been able to raise that amount of money since we started with nothing in 1987 when we received the Ray property. God had shown us how he can provide in a mighty way.⁷

Pelham Outreach Ministries

Since moving to the new Pelham Church building, several new ministries have been started. Golden Age Fellowship ministers to senior citizens in the valley by providing food and fellowship the second Tuesday of each month. Freaky Friday is a once-a-month program for elementary school age students. It is somewhat like a vacation Bible school with a Bible story, crafts, music, recreation, and snacks. We have had a newsletter for several years. Elsie Harlan Brothers was the publisher of our monthly newsletter for a period of 12 years. That duty was then taken over by Kim Meeks Hopkins of Providence Church for awhile. Megan Coats Benton is now carrying on that tradition as publisher of the “Messenger,” the Charge newsletter. Maxine Partin Wade has assisted Megan with that work from time to time. Our Sunday morning social hour is “Holy Grounds.” It meets at 9:00 A.M. and is a time for drinking coffee and talking with friends before Sunday School.

Pelham Charge

The term “charge” comes from the fact that a minister is charged or instructed to carry forth the gospel to his church or churches regardless of the numbers of members or miles apart. In order for several small churches to have a minister when they could not support one on their own, the Pelham Charge was formed. Through this system, a church could have a preacher on a rotational basis every other Sunday. The Pelham Charge was originally made up of five churches—Alto, Bethel, Pelham, Providence, and Valley Home. Bethel Church was disbanded in the early 1960s during Leon Norris’ tenure as pastor. The ministers listed for Pelham also served the other churches on the circuit.

During April 2002, the District Superintendent announced a change in the configuration of the Pelham Charge. It will remain a charge; however, the Pelham Church will be assigned a part time minister who will serve every

Sunday while the senior pastor will continue to live in the parsonage and hold services at Alto, Providence, and Valley Home. The Pelham minister will be Miriam Seyler, a student at the University of the South in Sewanee.

Pelham Charge Parsonage

On 19 March 1898 Thomas Patton and his wife, S. E. Patton, sold an acre of land to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South for \$50. The property, lying in Grundy County, Tennessee Civil District No. 9, was to be kept and maintained as a place of residence for the use and occupancy of the preacher of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in the United States of America.⁸

Apparently by 1900 there was some question as to the Pattons' ownership of the land bought by the Methodist Church. There is on record a deed dated 25 January 1900, registered in Book N, page 224 from T. B. Patton and wife Clemmie Patton to P. T. Gilliam, R. H. White, J. L. W. Blair, J. F. Bell, and A. A. Campbell, Trustees of the Pelham Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Attached to it is a statement made by Jeff Fults. The statement reads in part,

Several years ago I had occasion to get up an abstract of title to a lot in Pelham near this lot, and I went to Nashville, Tenn., and found a grant from the State of Tennessee to a Patton and some other party that covered and included the lot, and I am sure it also covered the Church lot described (in the deed), but if mistaken in this, I know the lot in question is on granted land. In other words on land that the State had parted its title to some one, and this title if not to Patton was later conveyed to him.

As I am informed the Trustees of the M. E. Church, South, have had buildings on this lot for many years, and seven years quiet, peaceable, adverse and exclusive possession under a registered deed purporting to convey a fee simple title perfects title to the land. Hence the title to the lot in question was perfected many years ago. . .

Hence it is my opinion that the title to the lot described above is in the Trustees of said Church, free and unencumbered since no taxes attach to Church property. This March 5, 1954.

In 1954 the trustees of the Pelham Charge sold a lot adjoining the present day parsonage. It is the land on which Joann Jacobs Cunningham Western's house now sits. The land was originally sold to Alex and Bettie Gunn by trustees Kenneth Wilson, Mrs. Grace Gilliam, Mrs. Bettie Gunn, Crawford Keller, Mrs. Bettie Ikard, Eldridge Hamby, and Mrs. Emily Ikard. The old parsonage was moved from its location where the current parsonage is

situated to the adjoining lot and a new parsonage was built on the original site. The new parsonage stood until it burned in 1973 during Pastor Gary Gressmire's tenure. Ray Hines remembers the volunteer fire department hosing down the old parsonage next door to keep it from burning, too. The present parsonage was built to replace the burned building.

The land sold to Alex and Bettie Gunn was later sold to Cam Conry. After Mr. Cam's death, his wife, Lorene Wilson Conry moved out of Tarry Cove to the property.⁹

CLERGY APPOINTED TO PELHAM UMC¹⁰

YEAR	MINISTER	CIRCUIT	DISTRICT
1823			
1824			
1825			
1826			Huntsville
1827			Huntsville
1828			Huntsville
1829			Huntsville
1830			Huntsville
1831			Huntsville
1832			Huntsville
1833			Huntsville
1834			Shelbyville
1835			Shelbyville
1836			Shelbyville
1837			Shelbyville
1838			Huntsville
1839			Murfreesboro
1840			Huntsville
1841			Cumberland
1842			Cumberland
1843			Cumberland
1844			Winchester
1845	Abner Bowen; Joseph Smith, sup.	Winchester Circuit	Winchester
1846	William H. Adams	Winchester Circuit	Winchester
1847	Andrew J. B. Foster	Winchester Circuit	Winchester
1848	David R. Hooker	Winchester	McMinnville
1849	Thomas J. Neely	Winchester	McMinnville
1850	Anderson Gwinn Copeland	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville
1851	Anderson Gwinn Copeland	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville
1852	Arthur W. Smith	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville
1853	William D. Brown	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville
1854	William P. Nichols; James A. Walkup, supernumerary	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville

1855	John Nelson Allen	Winchester Circuit	McMinnville
1856	William H. Anthony; John James Pittman, supernumerary	Manchester	McMinnville
1857	James H. Richey; John James Pittman, supernumerary	Manchester	McMinnville
1858	Robert T. McBride; John James Pittman, supernumerary	Manchester	McMinnville
1859	Robert T. McBride	Manchester	McMinnville
1860	William Horace Anthony; George Davidson Guinn, supernumerary	Pelham	McMinnville
1861	Robert T. McBride	Pelham	McMinnville
1862	To be supplied	Pelham	McMinnville
1863	- no minutes -	Pelham	McMinnville
1864	- no minutes -	Pelham	McMinnville
1865	William Horace Anthony	Pelham	McMinnville
1866	Robert Randolph Jones	Manchester Circuit	McMinnville
1867	Allen Tribble	Manchester Circuit	McMinnville
1868	Robert Purdy Ganaway	Manchester Circuit	McMinnville
1869	Robert Purdy Ganaway	Manchester Circuit	McMinnville
1870	George Smith Byrom	Manchester	McMinnville
1871	William Horace Anthony	Alto	McMinnville
1872	George Smith Byrom; William Horace Anthony, supernumerary	Alto & Mountain Mission	McMinnville
1873	George Davidson Guinn	Alto & Mountain Mission	McMinnville
1874	George Davidson Guinn	Alto & Mountain Mission	McMinnville
1875	George Davidson Guinn	Hillsboro	McMinnville
1876	George Davidson Guinn; Robert Purdy Ganaway, supernumerary	Hillsboro	McMinnville
1877	A. M. Thornton	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1878	Abner Lee Comer ¹¹	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1879	Abner Lee Comer	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1880	Abner Lee Comer	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1881	George Davidson Guinn	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1882	George Davidson Guinn	Hillsboro	McMinnville
1883	William Henderson Gilbert, Jr.	Hillsboro	McMinnville
1884	William Doss	Hillsboro	McMinnville
1885	John Nathaniel Handlin	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1886	John Nathaniel Handlin	Hillsboro Circuit	McMinnville
1887	Felix W. Johnson	Hillsboro Circuit	Shelbyville
1888	Samuel Jackson Shasteen	Hillsboro Circuit	Shelbyville
1889	George Davidson Guinn	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1890	George Davidson Guinn	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1891	John Rucker Reeves	Pelham	Shelbyville
1892	Joseph F. Martin	Hillsboro Circuit	Murfreesboro
1893	James Albert Bridges	Hillsboro	Murfreesboro

1894	Joseph F. Martin; Edward G. Robertson	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1895	John Nathaniel Handlin	Hillsboro Circuit	Fayetteville
1896	Ulysses Newland Maffitt Berry	Hillsboro Circuit	Fayetteville
1897	John T. Duncan	Pelham Mission	Fayetteville
1898	John Wesley Rooker	Pelham Mission	Fayetteville
1899	John Wesley Rooker	Pelham Mission	Fayetteville
1900	William Skelton Taylor	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1901	W. H. Carter	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1902	W. H. Carter	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1903	Pleasant D. Freeman	Elk Valley Mission	Fayetteville
1904	William Reed Wilson	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1905	William Reed Wilson	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1906	William Reed Wilson	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1907	S. G. Treadaway	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1908	Samuel H. Parks	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1909	Samuel H. Parks	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1910	William Edgar Couser	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1911	William Edgar Couser	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1912	L. W. Stewart	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1913	Lonnie Freeman	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1914	Charles Franklin Bell	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1915	Charles Franklin Bell	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1916	Charles Franklin Bell	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1917	Charles Franklin Bell	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1918	George Milton Davenport	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1919	Willis Fields Burden	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1920	R. J. Tucker	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1921	Alvis Jefferson Davis	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1922	Alvis Jefferson Davis	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1923	Alvis Jefferson Davis	Pelham Circuit	Fayetteville
1924	Oliver Lewis Green	Pelham	Fayetteville
1925	William Franklin Norman	Pelham	Fayetteville
1926	Thomas M. Wilson	Monteagle & Pelham	Fayetteville
1927	Woodward Abernathy Adams, Sr.	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1928	Woodward Abernathy Adams, Sr.	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1929	Edward Lee Knowles	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1930	Edward Lee Knowles	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1931	James Elijah Trotter	Monteagle Circuit	Fayetteville
1932	James Elijah Trotter	Monteagle Circuit	Pulaski
1933	James Elijah Trotter	Monteagle	Pulaski
1934	James Elijah Trotter	Monteagle	Pulaski
1935	William Comer Morehead	Monteagle Circuit	Pulaski
1936	Thomas Erle Hillard	Monteagle Circuit	Pulaski
1937	R. D. Hill	Monteagle Circuit	Pulaski
1938	Lawrence B. Hicks	Pelham Circuit	Pulaski

1939	Lawrence B. Hicks	Pelham Circuit	Pulaski
1940	Lawrence B. Hicks	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1941	Lawrence B. Hicks	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1942	Lawrence B. Hicks	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1943	William Warren Owen ¹²	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1944	James Elijah Trotter	Hillsboro & Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1945	James Elijah Trotter	Hillsboro-Pelham	Murfreesboro
1946	Henry J. Neal ¹³	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1947	Henry J. Neal	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1948	John Mitchell Sawyer	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1949	John Mitchell Sawyer	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1950	John Mitchell Sawyer	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1951	John Mitchell Sawyer	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1952	Robert Crawford Reid	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1953	R. C. Woodard ¹⁴	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1954	R. C. Woodard ¹⁵	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1955	Dorris Payne Smotherman, Jr.	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1956	Dorris Payne Smotherman, Jr.	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1957	Joseph Morris	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1958	James Leon Wilson	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1959	James Leon Wilson	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1960	Robert Franklin Smith	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1961	Robert Franklin Smith	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1962	Robert Franklin Smith	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1963	Walter Leon Norris	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1964	Walter Leon Norris	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1965	Walter Leon Norris	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1966	Walter Leon Norris	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1967	Walter Leon Norris	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1968	Benny Wilbert Davis	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1969	Benny Wilbert Davis	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1970	Earl N. Hocker	Pelham Circuit	Murfreesboro
1971	Earl N. Hocker	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1972	Earl N. Hocker	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1973	Gary Gressmire	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1974	Willie B. Nunley	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1975	Willie B. Nunley	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1976	James G. Rippy	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1977	James G. Rippy	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1978	William T. Haynes III	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1979	William T. Haynes III	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1980	Lee Roy Wright	Pelham	Murfreesboro
1981	Lee Roy Wright	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1982	Lee Roy Wright	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1983	Arthur L. Smith	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1984	Arthur L. Smith	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro

1985	Arthur L. Smith	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1986	Arthur L. Smith	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1987	Joe Rutherford ¹⁶	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1988	Joe Rutherford	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1989	Joe Rutherford	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1990	Joe Rutherford	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1991	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1992	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1993	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1994	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1995	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1996	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1997	Douglas Eugene Green	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1998	Anthony “Andy” Perry	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
1999	Anthony “Andy” Perry	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
2000	Anthony “Andy” Perry	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro
2001	Donald L. Stone	Pelham Charge	Murfreesboro

¹ The Isaac Conger diary of 1813, transcribed by Carey E. Waldrip Sr., 1973. The original diary is in the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville.

² *Franklin County Deed Book*, November 1818–April 1828, p. 381.

³ *Grundy County Deed Book #55*, p. 55. The deed was recorded 29 May 1950.

⁴ This information was supplied by Ray and Janie Gallagher Hines.

⁵ Information supplied by Mike (son of Emmett Goodman) and Sharon Nee Goodman.

⁶ The stained glass windows are the work of artist J. R. Scott of Alto Studios, located at the end of Sanders Road in Franklin County.

⁷ This information was supplied by Elsie Brothers, church treasurer, and Reeda Shelton.

⁸ *Grundy County Deed Book K*, p. 31. The deed was recorded 27 July 1898 by John Scruggs, clerk.

⁹ This information was supplied by Ray and Janie Gallagher Hines, and Tom and Mary Ellen Roberts Patton.

¹⁰ This information was taken from the records of Della Bowden through 1953. Raymond G. and Janie Hines compiled the post 1953 records.

¹¹ Local records suggest that, prior to 1878, Tom White served as a local pastor.

¹² Local records suggest that Owen served as minister until the end of World War II.

¹³ Local records suggest that C. H. Kilby, a local minister from Tracy City, served most of this year’s appointment.

¹⁴ Because Woodard was crippled, he preached sitting down.

¹⁵ Local records suggest that, due to the illness of R. C. Woodard, Oliver H. Lane served the appointment from about February till the time of conference.

¹⁶ Joe married Betty Daniel while serving here.

Methodism in Pelham Valley Pelham, Tennessee, 1813-2002, Part Two

Janelle Layne Coats

[Editor's Note: This article is continued from Vol. 3, no. 4]

Alto Church in Franklin County

The original record of the Alto Methodist Church, located in Franklin County, dates back to 1875. There was no church property at this date, so meetings were held in the school house. Rev. R. L. McBride was the first pastor. At that time the church was on the Manchester Circuit. Some of the first members were Mary Sherrill, Martha Bennett, Lucinda Abernathy, James Bryant, Willie Moore, Joseph Ikard, William Gibson, James Gilliam, and J. W. Blair.

On 28 June 1879 the first Sunday School was reported with about fifty members. A. J. Ikard was the superintendent.

In 1882 the Hillsboro Circuit was organized, and the Alto Church became a part of it with Rev. George D. Guinn as pastor.

On 22 January 1889 J. P. Henley and wife gave a deed to the land on which the present church stands. The property was valued at \$800. In that year, the church became a part of Pelham Circuit.

A storm destroyed the original church in 1931; then the present one was built with one large chapel. In 1946 three classrooms were added to the church while Rev. C. H. Kilby was pastor (Rev. Kilby was not appointed through the conference, but was a local preacher). In 1955, another classroom was added for the youth group while Rev. R. C. Woodard was pastor.

Presently there are 96 members on the Alto Church membership role, and the property is valued at \$10,000.¹

Bethel Methodist Church in Burrows' Cove

The Bethel Methodist Church was established at its present site in Burrows' Cove in 1896 on land given by James Sartain. The church was named Bethel by James' wife, Isabella. The building now standing in front of Sartain Cemetery, still known as Bethel, is no longer a part of the Pelham United Methodist Church Charge. It closed its doors during the early 1960s during Leon Norris' assignment as pastor.

A. "Arch" Campbell served as the first superintendent of the Sunday School and continued to serve until his death in 1919. Successive superintendents were Huse Hawk, Wesley Summers, Eldridge "El" Hamby, Rufus Bonner, and Paul Hawk. Thursa Meeks and Barney Johnson served as organists while Vinnie Hamby and G. C. "Cleve" Hamby were song leaders.

Early members of the church were Jim & Mary Hargis Sartain and family, Jim & Kate Blanton Hawk and their daughter Maymie Hawk (Sartain), Aaron & Caroline Speegle Sartain and family; Betty, Tim, Mary Lee, Ethel, and Vinney Sartain, Bessie, Jennie, Nell, and Margie Sartain; Eldridge and Vin Crabtree Hamby, Rufus and Etta McCarver Bonner and family, and the John Hawk family. John Hawk always rode his mare, Fannie, and tied her to the hitching rail alongside the church.

In the mid 1980s community revivals and occasional meetings began being held at Bethel once again. The congregation began to grow. Today Bethel is functioning as a community church having weekly meetings. Bethel Cemetery is located just up Highway 50 from Bethel Church.²

Providence Church

Prior to the Civil War, church and Sunday School were conducted in a building called White's School, located in Bell's Cove just up against the rocky outcroppings of the ridge near Clarence and Fay Garner's home. This building served as both church and school for the community.

After the war, the meeting place was moved to a building where Providence cemetery now is located. It was a log building with split log seats and was used for church and school for a few years and was named "Providence" which indicates God's care of humankind.

Joseph Bradshaw and A. C. Smith donated ground for this church and school. In 1869, a new church, a huge building with large poles in the center, was erected with only a few members attending. All leading citizens assisted

the church with donations of labor. These citizens included Joseph Bradshaw, A. C. Smith, J. F. Laxson, Daniel Patterson, J. W. Sullivan, G. D. Guinn, Wash Bennett, Martin Powers, S. D. Rowe, Harris Bell, Robert Bell, Frank Bell, Mose Crouch, Mr. Walker, and several more whose names are not remembered. A circuit rider would visit the church, and local preachers helped with the preaching.

In 1907 or 1908, the present building was erected. All the superintendents are not remembered, but Bob Crouch was an active member and superintendent for several years. He and his family did much for the church. Bob Henley was at one time the song leader. He and his family were dependable members. In the mid 1920s, Sunday School was inactive for a few years. Goats would get in the church house and tear up the song books.

In 1929 or 1930, Jewel Patterson Partin and Gladys Baker Clark, seeing all the young people growing up in the community with no church or Sunday School, decided to do something about it. They pooled resources to send out cards to invite people to meet at the church to reorganize a Sunday School. A large crowd attended. A. J. (Uncle Andy) Patterson was nominated and elected superintendent and teacher for the adult class. Other teachers were appointed and Sunday School began again. This was during the Great Depression. Roads were bad; people walked to church mostly; money was scarce; and jobs were few. Uncle Andy kept the Sunday School going by furnishing literature for all classes until times got better and everyone could help more with the finances. He picked up limbs from woods near the church to build a fire in the pot bellied stove which was the only heat for the church. On real cold days, folks sat around the stove. Uncle Andy worked untiringly to get more people interested in the church. He went through the neighborhood collecting funds for the pastor. He would take field peas, chickens, or anything that could be sold. He would sell the produce to a peddler (store on wheels) which came through each week. At times few attended church, but he never gave up.

About this time the Keller family moved in to the community and became active participants in church affairs. Crawford Keller became song leader. In 1938 Emmett Sanders was appointed adult teacher and held the position until his death.

In 1953 three class rooms were added and membership averaged 79 with Sunday School attendance over 80. Many ministers, both young and old, have served as pastors, some coming from Hillsboro, some from Monteagle

and other places.

Since 1953 the pastors have lived at the Pelham Parsonage and Providence has been served by the charge appointed preacher.

A fellowship hall was built onto Providence Church in 1964.³

Valley Home Methodist Church

On 15 November 1953, Rev. R. C. Woodard, the pastor of Pelham Charge, met with 47 Methodist believers in the Valley Home School to discuss organizing a church. It was decided to start the church with Bill Rieder as Superintendent. The teachers elected at the time were Rachel Bonner Jacobs (adult), Jewel Patterson Partin (young people), Bob Cox (teenagers), and Anna White Roper (beginners). Bro. Woodard ordered the literature, and Providence Church gave some song books they weren't using, so on 22 November 1953 the first church school services were held in Mrs. Viola Aylor's old store (located where Bill and Sherry Hazen now live on the corner lot by the road to Chapman's Chapel). Adult class officers elected were, Horace Henley; president, Dessie Wooten Aylor; secretary, and Lucille Henley Goodman; treasurer.

On 29 November 1953, the M. Y. F. (Methodist Youth Fellowship) was organized with Joe Hardy as President and Jewel Patterson Partin as the adult leader. It became one of the best in the district. The first Christmas program was held 24 December 1953, at the school house. The M. Y. F. held the first Sunrise Service ever held in Pelham Valley on 18 April 1954 at Wonder Cave. It was a very impressive outdoor service with 25 young people participating. The M. Y. F. members were very active in helping to build the church by putting their hands to whatever task needed to be done. One such task was on 27 May 1954 when they purchased 30 chairs for the church using their own money.

On 5 January 1954, Joe Sartain, Jewel Patterson Partin, and Alma Brashear Henley were elected stewards, and it was decided to pay the preacher \$10 per week. Horace U. and Alma Brashear Henley gave the land to build the church in March 1954. It was decided the church building should be 53 feet by 33 feet with a full basement. Ralph Bonner, Jonas Rieder, Charles Jacobs and Horace Henley staked the ground for the building 25 March 1954, and on 26 March 1954 Hulon Smith and Boyd Edwards, using county equipment, dug the basement. The first blocks were laid 15 April

1954, and on 23 May 1954 the basement was finished enough to hold the first church school services. On 29 May 1954, Rev. Ellis Brashear, brother to Alma Henley, preached the first sermon in the basement. He was the only Methodist preacher who had been raised in this area at the time.

On 6 June 1954, Bro. Woodard baptized Arlene Partin, the first on to be baptized in the church, and on 27 June 1954 the first Vacation Bible School was held. Bro. Bronstetter held the first revival on 4 July 1954.

The W. S. C. S. (Woman's Society of Christian Service) was organized on 16 August 1954 with Alma Brashear Henley as president, Ruby Bonner Sartain as vice president, Jewel Patterson Partin as youth leader, Jean Partin Scott as secretary, Anna White Henley Roper as treasurer, Raybell Bean Hardy as spiritual leader, and Rachel Bonner Jacobs as teacher of divinity. The ladies of the church wanted to have pews for the new sanctuary, but the men didn't think they could afford it at the time. The women ordered the pews anyway and they made up enough money to pay for them by the time the new pews arrive. The first year, with hard work, more money was raised by Valley Home than by any other W. S. C. S. organization in the district. This was done largely by having suppers, making quilts and other handmade articles to sell.

Don Rieder preached his first sermon on 6 September 1954, and in coming months he became the first preacher to come from the church.

Bro. Woodard was not in good health so on 3 February 1955 it was decided to ask Bro. Oliver Lane to assist him. Shortly after this time one of the ladies who helped start the church, Betty Armstrong Jacobs, passed away. Hers was the first funeral preached in the church. That was on 17 August 1955.

Love, hard work, and the dedication of the church members and their friends finished the church, and by 31 July 1955 the first sermon was preached in the new sanctuary.

Bishop Roy Short dedicated the building on 11 September 1955, and at this time a new preacher was received. He was Bro. Dorris Smotherman whose first sermon was on that day. Bro. Smotherman got married during his term as preacher of the charge.

On 26 April 1956, Bro. Smotherman christened the first babies, Stevie Allen Smith and Jerry Wayne Henley. The first wedding in the church was Ruth Dyer and Arden Bonner in July 1956.

The church was paid out of debt on 1 January 1960, six years, one month,

and fifteen days from the time of the first meeting.

In the fall of 1979, church members agreed to let the Senior Citizens meet in the building. Storage space and rest rooms were constructed.

In recent years, church membership has fallen, and this church is now the smallest on the Pelham Charge.

Charter members of Valley Home Church include Joe Sartain, Ruby Bonner Sartain, Betty Armstrong Jacobs, Henry Jacobs, Lucille Henley Goodman, W. J. "Bill" Rieder, Alma Brashear Henley, AnnaWhite Henley Roper, Dessie Wooten Aylor, R. B. Cox, Sr., Buford Partin, Jewel Patterson Partin, Vivian Henley Fults, Nannie Rieder Parks, Arlene Partin, Joe Hardy, Horace Upton Henley, Donald W. Rieder, W. J. Rieder, Sr., and Verna Rhee Floyd Rieder.⁴

Pelham Colored Methodist and Baptist Church

Just down Bell Road, which is located behind the old Pelham Methodist Church, is a building on the left where Opal Mayes Vestal now lives. It was in this building that the blacks of Pelham Community went to school and worshiped. George and Almeda Sanders Payne deeded the land there to Anderson Willis and his wife Bell.

A building was erected and was used for school and church. Both the Methodists and Baptists used the building on alternate Sundays. Those who attended it reported that they found it difficult to tell the difference in the two denominations, but they did have different preachers. Among the Methodists were Rev. Hicks, Bro. Guthrie, Bro. Randolph, Bro. Reasonover, and Sister Allen who was an evangelist from Nashville. Baptist ministers were Bro. Robinson, Bro. Holt, Ben Southern, and Bro. Buchanan. George Gwinn was a steward at the Methodist Church while Anderson Willis was a deacon in the Baptist Church.

Elizabeth Wooten, one of the teachers at the school, said, "The preachers' salaries were whatever the collection of the day happened to be, less what it cost to buy lamps, kerosene, globes, and a broom."

Janelle Coats said, "I remember attending this church when I was a very young girl. Elsie and Elbert Layne who were mother and father, Nana Lou Hamby and I went to a Christmas play there. The performance area was dimly lit, and it was dark in the back where the audience was located. The children sang '*Up on the House Top*', and when they came to the line of

‘click, click, click’ they made the clicks with their tongues. That delighted me, and from then on I sang the song with the tongue click rather than saying the words, ‘click, click, click.’”

The Pelham Colored School and Church closed in 1953 since the black community dispersed in the search for employment in surrounding towns such as Sewanee and Manchester.

Payne’s Cove Congregational Methodist Church

In the mid 1800s a Mr. Sanders, great-great grandfather of Josie Sanders, gave land to the community to build a church. It was to be a one room log structure for members of the Presbyterian faith. Phillip Roberts, Bro. Crawford, and possibly Bro. Price were ministers in that early church which was eventually torn down because of decay in the late 1800s. A new frame building with a large steeple and bell was erected on the site and used for both school and church. This time the church was Methodist. This building was later blown away by a storm in 1929 or 1930. In the late 1940s on land given by John and Bob Oliver, Larson Winton and Charlie Roberts constructed the building located beside the Payne’s Cove Cemetery. In the 1970s classrooms were added to that building. Although the building is still standing, it is in a state of disrepair. The Methodist congregation has a new building across the road at the site of the old Payne’s Cove School. This new building was completed and dedicated 13 September 1992. A new fellowship hall was added in the late 1990s and two new bathrooms were completed in 2000.

Known Methodist pastors at Payne’s Cove include Phillip Roberts, John Akins, Tom White, Gene Richards, James Bean, Stanley Shrum, Elmer Land, Rodney Campbell, Ed Evans, Vester Meeks, Marvin Meeks, Clifford Trussell, Buford Nunley, Randy King, Joe Meeks, Roger Parker, Arnold Dykes, Bro. Anderson (brother-in-law of Rodney Campbell), W. H. Caldwell, T. L. Pyburn (from Dunlap), Paul Haynes, Leon Crisp, Jim (Mutt) Nunley, and James Smith (from Tullahoma), who is the current pastor.

Charter members of the Methodist Church in Payne’s Cove include Phillip Roberts, Floyd and Ethyl Bean, George Washington Magouirk, Martha Ooley Magouirk, Lloyd and Jenny Bean, Larson Winton and Della Oliver Northcutt Winton, Josie Nunley, Elic Roberts, Lizzie Roberts, Mattie Woodlee Meeks, Myrtle Meeks Oliver, Lizzie Nunley Brinkley, and Alma Nunley Magouirk

(Lizzie & Alma were daughters of Bill & Josie Nunley).

Current membership in 2002 is about 50.⁵

One of the great stories that Gladys Woodlee Roberts tells about Payne's Cove is the night Philip Roberts was preaching about being a steadfast Christian and that those who truly repent could not be "run off" from church. Ike Roberts, an irreverent relative, and an accomplice decided to challenge the fact that the congregation couldn't be "run off". Someone had butchered and skinned a beef leaving the head and hide fairly well intact. Ike and his friend, being intoxicated, draped the skin over themselves and proceeded to go to the church where they presented themselves under the beef hide. Walking down the center aisle, they let out a hearty "moo" and startled churchgoers began bailing out of the windows much to the delight of Ike and his friend who just wanted to see if the congregation could be "run off".

In another occurrence the preacher was giving a sermon about Peter and the cock crowing three times when suddenly in the center aisle there appeared—what else?—but a crowing cock probably ushered in the back door by some mischievous hand.⁶

Layne's Cove Union Church

After a brush arbor meeting held by Bro. Cribbs, William Thomas "Bill" Layne decided that the Layne's Cove Community needed a church building. He and his brother, Abraham, looked over the lot and decided on a triangular piece of land on which the present day Church of God sits and stepped it off. Abraham, his sons John, Bill, and others cut logs for the beams overhead and the floor sills. Soon the rough sawed board walls were erected and church began.

A deed conveying ½ acre to the church was made by William T. Layne and his wife Nettie E. Parker Layne on 28 December 1936 to the trustees of the church. These were Bill Thomas, J. Hense Layne, and Abraham K. Layne. These men were Methodists, but the church was to be nondenominational with the exclusion of ministers of the Catholic and Mormon faiths.

William T. "Bill" Layne, being a called preacher himself, was the primary minister as well as musician. He played a pump organ while his followers sang.

Since there was no denomination, people did not join the church. They

merely attended. Early attendees of the church were Bill and Nettie Parker Layne and family, Harris Gilliam, Dellie and Annie Layne Gilliam and family, Morris and Leora Layne Hill, Huey Gipson, Edd and Nannie Rieder Parks and family, Helen Tucker, Ozella Magouirk Meeks Layne, George and Beedie Meeks Hassebrock and family, Etta Gilliam Layne and family, Hattie Partin Hill and family, Hense Layne, and Wilson Tucker.

This original church fell into disuse after a number of years of activity. A new building was constructed in 1965 on the same site. The new church now operates as a Church of God even though it had Methodist roots. In 2002 a major addition to the building is being constructed.⁷

Methodism has strong roots in Pelham Valley. There are more Methodist churches in the area than any other denomination at this time. We at Pelham UMC know that God has a plan for us. He would not have allowed us to have accomplished all that has been done if he did not. It is our hope and prayer that we will be open to his callings and that we can help to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person in Pelham Valley and the adjoining communities so that each one may have that “Blessed Assurance” that Jesus is his or hers and that the God shaped opening inside their hearts will be filled with His love until it is overflowing.

¹ This information was supplied by Paul & Ida Sherrill Jackson.

² This information was supplied by Tim Sartain Hawk and Vernon Bonner. See also Cullen T. Carter, ed., *History of the Methodist Church and Institutions in Middle Tennessee, 1787-1956* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1956), p. xx; Arlene Partin Bean and Janelle Coats, *Homecoming “86 History of the Elk River Valley (Pelham Valley) of Grundy County, TN*, (Manchester: Beaver Press, 1986), pp. 107-108.

³ This information was supplied by Edith Hill Patterson, Lorene Patterson Mottern, Jewel Patterson Partin Jacobs, and Elbert and Thursie Wilson Patterson. See also Bean and Coats, p. 107.

⁴ Much of this information came from the diary of Alma Brashear Henley, which has been compiled by her daughter, AnnaWhite Henley Roper. See also Bean and Coats, pp. 106-107.

⁵ This information was supplied by Maymie Meeks Morris and her son Don Morris. See also Bean and Coats, p. 102.

⁶ Jimmy Northcutt and his sister Connie Northcutt Meeks compiled this information. See also Bean and Coats, p. 102.

⁷ This information compiled from Irene Gilliam Meeks, Johnny Layne, and Grundy County Deeds. See also Bean and Coats, p. 101.