

71369

1786

LEXINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
LEXINGTON, GEORGIA

This church was organized under the name of Bethsalem Presbyterian Church. It was originally in the Presbytery of South Carolina, later in that of Hopewell, later in that of Augusta, then Athens and then transferred back to Augusta Presbytery in 1906. Early proof date information can be found filed under the name of Bethsalem Presbyterian Church in this binder.

Signed: *Emma P. Ivy*

Mrs. J. Swanton Ivy, Historian
Athens Presbyterial

Filed April 1948

On site of old Bath. Salem
Presbyterian church.
The oldest, and first.
Presbyterian Church organized in Ga.
1785.



First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Ga.

1335
HISTORY OF LEXINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The history of this Church begins with the organization of a Presbyterian Church by John Newton, near Huchings, Georgia, which was called Beth-Salem, meaning a perfect house. In 1784 a band of emigrants, about twenty in number, composed of men, women and children, including Mr. Newton, left Pennsylvania and the following year settled about three miles West of Lexington, Georgia, among the hostile Indians. On December 20th., 1785, Beth-Salem Church was organized by Mr. Newton and his followers. He is said to be the first resident of Georgia ordained to the Presbyterian Ministry, the ordination services having been held at Duncan Creek in Laurens County, South Carolina, where the Presbytery of South Carolina met. The date of his ordination seems to be uncertain, but it must have occurred some time about the year 1788. Before his ordination he preached as a licentiate to those who were sharing with him the hardships of a life among the Indians, from whom they had to protect themselves by building a fort.

Under these adverse circumstances the Church increased in numbers, with Ezekiel Gilham, James Parks and James Espey as elders, until the death of Mr. Newton in 1797.

Following is a copy of the original charter and the members:

"We, the subscribers, do hereby declare to have joined ourselves together as a religious society for the support of the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for our mutual improvements in the doctrine of the Christian religion that God may be publicly and socially glorified by us in His earthly temples, and we by divine grace may be prepared to glorify Him in that temple not made by hands eternal in the heavens. And further - We do mutually agree that the place of meeting shall be hereafter known as Beth-Salem, and we, the members of said Beth-Salem Society, do now promise to pay, each for himself, unto Mr. John Newton the several sums annexed to our names on condition that he, the said John Newton, shall give unto us the two thirds of his labors for one year, which will be thirty-five Sabbaths.

In witness whereof, we do hereunto set our hands, this the 20th. day of December, 1785.

Robert Parks, Sam'l Smith, John Dimond, Robert Thompson, Joseph McCutchen, Thos. Armstrong, John King, Andrew McNaff, Jos. Thompson, Ezekiel Gilham, James McCutchen, Archabald Hogg, Samuel Park, Jas. Thompson, Jr., Wm. Foster, Hugh Foster, Jas. Spratlin, Archabald Thompson, John McFall, Jas. Scott, Joseph Scott, James Park, David Lucky, Wm. Lucky, Ben'j Knox, Jessie Lee, M. Alesberry, Andrew Bell, Jos. Alesby, Russell Jones, Ben'j. Alesby, John Aspey, John Miller, Wm. Luckey, Sr., Andrew Luckey, John Johnson, James Armstrong, Jessie K. Armstrong, Briant M. Armstrong, James Simpson, Johnathan Simpson, Jas. K. Simpson, Geo. Mitchell, Wm. Cooregan, Eliza Stevenson, John Tanner, Jos. Smith, Thos. Good, Allen K. Good, Chas. Lane, Jas. Stewart, Oliver Wollers, Geo. Carson, Geo. W. Fall, John Gretman, Jos. Jones, Samuel Knox, Ben'j. Knox, Jr., James C. Millan, Wm. McCree, James McCommon, Samuel Shields and John Bleckley."

The salary paid Mr. Newton, the first pastor, by the above members, on December 20th, 1785, was fifty pounds and seventeen shillings.

It would seem that the members after Mr. Newton's death became somewhat disorganized, and in 1814 the Church was burned by the Indians. Mr. Newton was buried in the Church yard of Beth-Salem, and just one hundred years after his burial his remains, in 1797, were removed to the Cemetery at Lexington and interred almost in front of the Lexington Presbyterian Church. In 1922 the Woman's Auxiliary of the Lexington Church placed a marker over his grave, with the following inscription:

Rev. John Newton.
Born 1759
Died 1797
"A Prince of Pioneer Evangelist."

On the back of the marker or hrad-stone the following inscription appears:

"The first resident of Georgia, ordained to the Presbyterian Ministry. The founder of Beth-Salem Church which was removed to Lexington and is now the Lexington Presbyterian Church. Just before the one hundredth anniversary of his death in 1896, his remains were removed to this place and his grave marked by the Woman's Auxiliary of the Lexington Presbyterian Church."

After the burning of the Church in 1814, the few members remaining, undaunted by the loss of their place of worship by the ruthlessness of the cruel Red Man, having consecrated their lives to so noble a cause, re-organized and built another Church at the same place and called it New Beth-Salem.

After the death of John Newton in 1797, the Church was without a Pastor and only had preaching occasionally by other pastors as supplies. The loss of members by removals, from disease and death caused the decline of the Church.

In 1822, Dr. Thomas Goulding, pastor of the Church at White Bluff in Liberty County, gathered up the relics of Beth-Salem Church and re-organized at Lexington, as the Lexington Presbyterian Church. William Campbell, who was the only surviving elder of the old Church, became an elder in the Lexington Church, and nominated Mr. David McLaughlin and Joseph Espey as elders and Mr. William Lesley as deacon. The charter members of the Church were, as follows:

William Campbell, David McLaughlin, William Lesley, Samuel McCauley, John Pharr, John F. Wallace, Joseph Espey, Mrs. Marion Grier, Mrs. Jane Jewell, Mrs. Jane Campbell, Sam McLaughlin, Mrs. Lesley, Mary Espey, Ann Gaulding, Damary Baldwin, Hannah Upson, Sara Walley, Martha Gilham, Sara Moore, Mrs. Mary Kennedy, Miss Maria Harrison, Rev. Thomas Goulding.

Dr. Goulding served the Church as pastor until 1830 and this building was used as a place of worship for sixty-nine years. In 1892 this house was sold, torn down and the present Church was erected. The congregation organized with William Stewart X and Geo. C. Smith as elders and Dr. Henry Quigg as Pastor. The oldest member of the Church is Miss Annie Knox, who united with it in 1865, after a sermon had been preached by the father of President Wilson. She is the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Knox who came to this Country from Ireland and one of seven sisters, all of whom were faithful and loyal members and supporters of the Church.

Woman's Work

In 1880 a Missionary Society was organized, having as members men, women and children. The women were too modest and retiring to serve as president so Mr. William Stewart, a faithful and consecrated member of the Church and also an elder, serving both as elder and Clerk of the Session from 1883 to 1895, was elected President. This society met one Sunday Afternoon in each month after the Sunday School and did fine work. Among the first members were: Mrs. John Stokely, Mrs. Moore, Mrs. William Stewart, Miss Laura and Miss Nella Moss and others. After a few years the society was

re-organized with women only as members. Mrs. Stewart, who was President, represented the Society in Greensboro in 1906, at the Woman's Missionary Union. In 1911 the Auxiliary was organized according to the Assembly's plan and Mrs. S. L. Maxwell was made President, serving until 1912. Presidents from that date to the present time are as follows:

Mrs. Joel Cloud	1912 - 1926
Mrs. E. J. Maxwell	1927 - 1928
Mrs. Joel Cloud	1929 - 1932

The Woman's Auxiliary disbanded about six years ago but was re-organized June 1938 with twelve members and with Mrs. Cloud President.

Sunday School

Diligent search of the minutes of the Church does not disclose any record as to the organization of the Sunday School and the writer had to resort to the recollection of some of the oldest residents of Lexington. To Miss Jennie Lester we are indebted for the information that there was an organized Sunday School in 1863 or 1864. She was one of the members of the school, and Mrs. Geo. R. Gilmer, widow of Governor Gilmer was at that time superintendent. This was during the Civil War when most of the men were in the Confederate Service. There was no other Sunday School in the town at that time so this must have been a union school. No record is found and no information obtainable as to who succeeded Mrs. Gilmer, but it is probable that Dr. Jas. Sims, Geo. F. Platt, Mr. F. L. Upson, an elder who left the Church one thousand dollars by his will, or some other faithful member of the Church, held the organization together until Mr. R. C. Latimer was elected some time in the seventies, serving through at least the early part of the eighties. Mr. Geo. C. Smith was elected to succeed Mr. Latimer and the latter moved to Athens, Georgia. Mr. Smith enjoys the distinction of having attended the Sunday School for thirty-five years, during which period he never missed a Sabbath, that is, he attended some School every Sunday. During this time he was serving either as an officer or Superintendent - a record of which he is justly proud and one which few, if any others, have. He moved to Florida in 1916 and was succeeded by Joel Cloud.

Mission Work

The Church has contributed to both Home and Foreign Missions for many years, giving

liberally of their means and up to a few years ago supported entirely the Pastor. No one has gone from the Church as a Missionary and none have given full time service to the work.

Miss Sallie Sims, a member of this church, married Rev. John Morton and their son, Ernest, is a minister who went as a Missionary to the Foreign Fields.

Pastors.

The following is a list of the pastors and supplies from the date of organization:

Rev. John Newton	1785 - 1797	Dr. John Jones	1883-1885
Dr. Thomas Goulding	1822 - 1830	Rev. J.D.A. Brown	1886-1888
Rev. Nathan Hoyt	1830 - 1843	Dr. Henry Quigg	1889-1893
Rev. Frank R. Goulding	1845 - 1847	Rev. E. G. Smith	1894-1910
Rev. McGill	1850 -	Dr. W. H. McMeen	1911-1912
Rev. John Reed	1847 - 1861	Rev. T. P. Burgess	1913-1915
Rev. R. Miller	1861 - 1865	Rev. McPhail	1915-1916
Dr. J. Robinson	1866 - 1868	Rev. A.G. Anderson	1917-1918
Rev. E. M. Green	1868 - 1872	Dr. M. W. Doggett	1918-1922
Rev. E. S. Bean	1872 - 1879	Rev. E.R. Anderson	1923-1924
Rev. J. B. Morton	1878 - 1883	Rev. W. P. Chalmers	1924-1926
		Rev. A. G. McEnnis	1927-1928
		Dr. B. R. Thornbury,	1928-1929
		Rev. J. T. Young	1929-1937
		Rev. S. W. Long, Present Pastor.	

This history would not be complete without special mention of the Gouldings. Dr. Thomas Goulding, who was no doubt the moving spirit in the re-organization of the old Church at Lexington, Georgia, in 1822, and served the Church as pastor until 1830, also organized the Seminary in 1828 in the old house which stands just opposite the Church. He had only five students in his first class. The Seminary so organized was moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where many preachers were trained and it is now located in Decatur, Georgia, having been moved to that City in 1927. Rev. Frank R. Goulding, brother

of the Doctor and who wrote, "The Young Marooners," was pastor of the Lexington Church from 1845 to 1847.

As well as the data can be gathered from the minutes, the following is a list of the elders and deacons and their terms of office: The elders of Old Beth-Salem, their terms of office not known, were Ezekiel Gilham, James Espey and perhaps others. At the time the church was organized at Lexington there seemed to have been only one surviving elder of the congregation. His name was William Campbell, who nominated as elders of the new congregation David McLaughlin and Joseph Espey, and he also nominated Mr. Lesley as deacon. This was in 1822.

The first record of the ordination of elders and deacons was in 1825, when Mr. John Pharr, John Rupert, Mr. Nathan Holbrook and Mr. Wm. M. Baldwin were ordained and installed as elders and Mr. John Lovejoy as deacon.

In 1828 J. H. Lumpkin, William Henry Daswon and Dr. A. Pond were accepted by the Church as ruling elders.

Others were:

G. M. Dudley	1830 - 1839	William Stewart	1883 - 1895
Col. J. H. Lumpkin	1829 - 1841	Geo. C. Smith	1891 - 1923
John F. Phinizy	1844 - 1866	J. F. M. Alexander	1896 -
Wm. McKinley	1839 - 1855	Joel Cloud	1900 -
F. L. Upson	1847 - 1875	H. B. Wallace	1916 - 1917
Geo. F. Platt	1847 - 1875	R. W. Cartledge	1923 -
R. C. Latimer	1877 - 1888	M. L. Harper	1920 - 1921
J. R. Boggs	1878 - 1888	M. O. Hollis	1920 - 1921
		E. J. Maxwell	1935 -

DEACONS

A list of the Deacons follows:

E.T. Roane	1891 - 1896	Hugh L. Wallace	1920 - 1928
H. B. Wallace	1904 - 1907	J. T. Alexander	1923 -
W. T. Stewart	1908 - 1912	W. D. Loyd	1924 - 1929

John M. Booth	1908 - 1910	W. H. Maxwell	1929 -
R. G. Knox	1920 - 1929	James E. Maxwell	1935 -

At the present time the elders are J. F.M. Alexander, R. W. Cartledge, E. J. Maxwell, and Joel Cloud, and the deacons are J. T. Alexander, W. D. Loyd, W. H. Maxwell, and James E. Maxwell.

Miss Nella Moss, the daughter of Prof. Thos. B. Moss who taught school at Meson Academy, Lexington, Georgia, for fifty years, died in 1934 and bequeathed to the Church the sum of Five Hundred Dollars and in her memory a bronz tablet was placed in the Church on the right side of the pulpit on which will be found the following inscription:

"In memory of Miss Nella Moss and Mr. and Mrs. James A. Hensley.
True friends of and Donors to this Church."

This history is far from being complete but it is a feeble effort of the writer to give some record of the noble work begun by Rev. John Newton at old Beth-Salem, which has been carried on in an imperfect way by others, and to show how, from the efforts of the little band of emigrants, under a kind Providence, encouraged, guided and directed by that "Pioneer Envangelist," with many things to hinder and discourage, the Lexington Presbyterian Church was organized as an off spring of the parent Church.

Mrs. Joel Cloud.
HISTORIAN.

Filed July 3, 1939