

History of Murphy's Chapel United Methodist Church

For a number of years before the building of Murphy's Chapel Church, the Methodist Episcopal and Baptist-Church groups worshiped together in a church building known as Red Bank, located on the bank of the Middle prong of the Pigeon River, about six miles east of Sevierville. Each of these groups had a pastor, and separate days for preaching services. When a revival was held, the pastor united their efforts and worked together.

At this time the M.E. Church, South, used a building on a nearby hill for services. The M.E. South congregation later joined the Red Bank group, giving them three pastors instead of two, and the membership of the three groups attended all services. Around the year 1885 or 86 the two Methodist groups became interested in building a church of their own. Colonel J.C. Murphy, a prominent citizen of that day, gave a plot of land about a mile from the Red Bank Church, on the bank of the same river. Assisted by Rev. Bilderback, pastor of the M.E. South group, he solicited "for the proposed building amounting to \$1,000.00

The trees for the building were donated by Arthur E. and Priscilla Murphy Newcomb, son and daughter of Col. Murphy. They were sawed into lumber by Alexander Umbarger of the Harrisburg Community on his water-powered sawmill.

Mr. Elliot Early and his brother William, members of the congregation, were given the contract for the building. A white frame, one-room, 33/42 ft. building was constructed. Labor

was donated by many members of the church. The Early brothers built the pulpit and chancel rail. The work was completed, and the church dedicated in 1887 by Rev. Bilderback.

The name Murphy's Chapel was chosen in honor of Colonel Murphy who had given so liberally and worked so faithfully to make the building possible.

The M.E. pastor at this time was Rev. Muncey. It was decided to use M.E. literature for six months and M.E. South literature for six, months of each year. All offerings, including mission money were divided equally between the two churches. The pastors held revivals together. This plan was followed without dissension throughout the year until unification came.

Some of the names on the oldest records are, Butler, Hicks, Early, Roberts, Robertson, Umbarger. Wayland.

J.W. Wayland was the first Sunday School Supt. He served for several years.

In 1922 a new highway was built, which necessitated facing the church in the opposite direction. The building was turned completely around without mishap into its present position.

In 1936 the union of the two branches of Methodism meant one pastor instead of two; one set of literature and no division of offerings. The church had long been united in spirit.

The church had long been a part of what is called the Sevierville Circuit. At one time the First Methodist Church of Sevierville was part of the circuit, along with Middle Creek, Roberts, and Shiloh (no longer in existence).

In 1919 the Sevierville Church became a station. The arrangement of the circuit has changed some through the years. At present the stations are Middle Creek, Murphy's Chapel, Roberts, and Loretta.

The first woman's society, "The Ladies Aid" was organized in 1922 with Mrs. W.A. Dixon as President. It has functioned continuously to the present time, with two name changes. In 1940 the name changed to, "The **Woman's Society of Christian Service, with a broader field** of service. In 1973 the name changed to, "The United Methodist Women."

The first young peoples organization, "The Epworth League" was organized in 1915. The "Methodist Youth Fellowship" functioned part of the time.

In 1952 Murphy's Chapel took a giant step forward, an addition was added to the church and a basement dug. This work was accomplished largely through the efforts of several men of the church who donated labor and worked faithfully until the work was finished. Many members and friends gave money. The results from the construction was , classrooms, kitchen, serving area, fellowship area, and an oil furnace. Later restrooms were added. Many other improvements followed: new hardwood flooring in the sanctuary, new pews, a new piano, and many more from time to time, contributing to the beauty and comfort of the church.

Murphy's Chapel has seen the old time "Circuit Rider" with his horse and saddle bags, spending the night in the homes of the community, and leading family prayers at bedtime.

Today we still have a "circuit rider" who drives from one church to another in a few minutes time.

The churches spirit still points upward to God.