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New Zion Clarendon County Church history revised and updated

New Zion United Methodist Church, New Zion

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SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THIS CHURCH

Methodism began in New Zion, South Carolina, in the year 1830 in a brush arbor. The preacher was Mr. John Lavender, who was a circuit rider. Two or three log churches were built before a framed building was erected. Services were held monthly by circuit riders.

The first grave to be dug in the cemetery was that of Mr. Deed Smith's grandparents and it was marked by cedar trees in the center of the cemetery. The first known marker was a Worsham child who was buried in 1847.

About the year 1845, the first frame church was built. Mr. Mack Hicks, Mr. Wade Kennedy, Mr. Ellison Johnson, and Mr. Anderson Boykin, along with other generous men, helped to build this church on the land given by "Captain Brans. Captain Brand was an engineer, who served as second commander of troops in the Salem section during the Civil War. The first minister was Reverend A. D. Betts, Sr. The first stewards were Mr. Anderson Boykin and Mr. W. E. Lavender.

A number of years later, with an increase in membership and attendance, this small church could not accommodate its members, so plans were made to build a larger church. The material and labor were donated by members and in 1882 the church was completed with the Reverend P. T. Phillips as its first pastor. This church had a library because The Life Of John Wesley was placed in it in the year 1897.

Many years later the membership had grown and the Sunday School classes had to meet in the sanctuary of the church. Effective classroom work was impossible in one room, so the members realized more and more that something had to be done and during the pastorate of The Reverend Max Christopher the building problems were discussed. Under his leadership a building fund of \$2,500 was set up.

During the pastorate of the Reverend T. W. Williams there was much discussion as to the best thing to do. Some wanted to remodel the old church and add Sunday School rooms but others wanted to build a new building.

In 1946 the Reverend W. J. Smoak was appointed to the New Zion Charge. He began talking about a new church and much interest began to grow. A free supper was prepared by the ladies and the entire membership was invited. At this supper, The Reverend Smoak told of the advantages of a new building and that night \$10,000 was raised. In May 1947, the foundation of the new church was laid and work began. On October 23, 1949, the first service was held in the new church with an unusually large crowd attending. The dedication service was held September 17, 1950.

The new church is of solid brick construction, with a 40 x 54 foot sanctuary, seven classrooms, a kitchen, pastor's study, and a recreational room. It was equipped with new furniture in the Sunday School rooms and the church. The pews were given by members and friends in memory of loved ones, as well as the communion table, altar set, communion set, collection plates, Bible, register and hymnals. The folding chairs for the classrooms were donated by a business man of

the community. The building was equipped with a gas heating system, but since then, a modern air-conditioning and heating system has been added. The Hammond organ was also placed in the sanctuary.

The building committee, finance committee, W.S.C.S. and the membership of the church worked hard to attain the goal which was set in 1947. The members of the building committee were as follows: R. P. Gibbons, chairman, R. T. Gibbons, W. E. Baker, Carlisle Lavender, W. L. Gibbons, and H. M. Morris. Members of the finance committee were: P. M. Gibbons, O. P. Johnson, J. G. Gardner, Willie L. Gibbons, E. B. Buddin, J. W. Gibbons, and Carlisle Lavender, Jr.

The ministers and their wives have served the New Zion charge diligently and faithfully. Mrs. A. Sassard organized the first missionary society at New Zion in 1926 and the W. S. C. S. has functioned through these years as a strong and faithful organization. In 1940, when the society was reorganized there were 48 charter members. Mrs. Lizzie Jane Buddin was elected president and since then the following ladies have served in this capacity: Mrs. R. P. Gibbons, Mrs. Tal Gibbons, Mrs. Wright Gibbons, Mrs. LeRoy DuBose, Mrs. Raymond Gibbons, Mrs. Willie L. Gibbons, Mrs. Henley B. Gibbons, Mrs. Leon Knowlton, Mrs. Edward C. Lavender, Mrs. Edgar DuBose, and Mrs. Roy Sharpe. *Note: these officers served prior to 1965, many others have served since then.*

The first parsonage was built near the frame church building and the land was given by Mr. Anderson Boykin. Then, in 1917, Mr. Charlie Lavender donated the land for a new frame parsonage to be built. The Reverend Elwell was the first minister to occupy this parsonage.

In 1954, the members of the charge decided to build a larger and more modern parsonage, so the frame one was sold and a lot was bought just across the street for a brick one to be erected. The Reverend Charles Kirkley was the first minister to occupy this parsonage.

Trinity and Shiloh Methodist churches joined the New Zion charge in 1917. In 1970, the Shiloh church was placed on the Pine Grove charge. They sold their interest in the New Zion parsonage for the sum of \$3,500. The lot and garage already belonged to the New "Zion church. This purchase was made possible with Ingathering funds.

In 1966, during the ministry of the Reverend Robert W. Tanner, the sanctuary was remodeled, and stained glass windows and wall to wall carpet were installed. The windows were given as memorials by church members and friends. In 1969, the pastor's study was remodeled. This one was established as a library in 1977, and a larger study was provided for the Reverend W. B. Love.

The Fellowship Hall was erected on church property during the ministry of the Reverend Harry Stullenbarger. It was completed on June 10, 1972, and the consecration service was held in July 1972. The mortgage was paid off on October 1975, leaving no indebtedness on our church.

The first parsonage was built on a given lot on Anderson Boykin's property to the right of the church building. In 1917, a larger framed building was erected on a given lot owned by Charles Lavender. The Reverend W. G. Elwell was the first occupant. At this time a new charge was

formed uniting New Zion, Shilo, Trinity, and Workman. In 1954, the present brick parsonage was built by the charge. The Reverend Charles Kirkley was the first minister to occupy this parsonage. In 1962, during the ministry of the Reverend Frank Manning, Workman was removed from the charge and in 1970 Shilo was removed and placed on the Pine Grove charge.

Two young men from New Zion church are now serving as ministers. The Reverend William Murray Gibbons went into full time service April 27, 1956, and the Reverend John Bruce Hicks entered the ministry in 1960. NOTE: Carl Lavender joined the ministry in 1985 and Rev. Hick died in 1988.

The first missionary society was organized in 1926. In 1940 it was reorganized as the Women's Society of Christian Service, and in 1972 renamed The United Methodist Women. These societies have functioned through the years as a strong, vital, and faithful part of the church.

The Methodist Men's Club was organized in 1950 during the ministry of the Reverend Harry Shuler and disbanded in 1973. This club was responsible for sponsoring "The Lord's Acre Program" which was later changed to "Ingathering". This project has been the high light of our church life and has been responsible for serving many useful and worthwhile needs for the church.

The Memorial Fund, in lieu of flowers, began in the year 1967. Many improvements for the church and grounds have been made by this fund, furnishing the nursery, landscaping the church grounds, providing supplies to the sanctuary to name a few.

An additional two acres of land joining the property was purchased from W. C. Plowden, Jr. to add to the parking lot and cemetery.

The Sanctuary was remodeled again in 2003, placing the choir behind the pulpit area, adding new chandeliers and lighting, and changing the color from green to pale blue/gray (Sherwin Williams "Ice Cube"). A baby grand piano was donated by the Sharpe families in memory Mrs. Earline Sharpe and Mrs. Alma Sharpe. New sound and video systems were added.

In 2011, the home of Dorothy C. Morris was purchased from her estate by New Zion UMC to serve as the parsonage. Trinity UMC decided to pay rent in lieu of joining in the purchase.

During years 2019 thru spring of 2021, due to COVID pandemic, church services were limited, suspended or held via video. This was not a good move for our small church. Full time services resumed in late 2021. Our current membership in January 2023 is 111 active members.

On January 29, 2023, the church members voted to disaffiliate from the United Methodist conference. Pending approval at Annual Conference to be held June, 2023, the church will become New Zion Methodist Church.

